3 vols

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WITH HARP AND CROWN.

to E. C. Haynes
from James Rice 1876.

WITH HARP AND CROWN.

A Novel.

BY THE AUTHORS OF

"READY-MONEY MORTIBOY,"

"MY LITTLE GIRL," "THIS SON OF VULCAN," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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WITH HARP AND CROWN.

CHAPTER I.

HEN the Princess Belle-Belle in the story is ravished from the castle, and carried off by the wicked sorcerers and demons of the rabble rout, she meets her troubles resigned, and leaves them unchanged. No anxieties of mind are able to dim the lustrous splendour of her beauty, or to furrow that fair cheek with the lines of trouble. She plunges into the sea of sorrow with a sigh, but emerges with a smile. Prince Florio is sure to be constant: her loveliness is not evanescent, like that of ordinary damsels; she waits in patience, conscious of the abiding disposition of her charms and the fidelity of her lover. Above

all, she has no duties. Heroines are never expected to do more than sit down. If the worst comes to the worst, she has but to cry, in the attitude of a startled fawn, "Unhand me, sir!" and straightway one at least of her defenders rushes in, sword drawn, and frees her in a twinkling from her oppressor. These dramatic rescues, indeed, are nothing more than the Princess Belle-Belle expects. And when the last chapter arrives, after which comes the real dulness of life, with tranquil wedded love and the rearing up to virtue of Princess Belle-Belle the Second, she steps to the throne on which, beneath the glare of the lime light, she poses a graceful farewell, ere she quits the agitated waters of adventure for the secluded haven of safety. In the after-years she will yawn, perhaps, over the peaceful present, while she recalls the variety and the charm, the doubt and the uncertainty, of the troubled past. It is a great thing to be a heroine of romance; but then it is so different from being a heroine of reality.

For, to begin with, in real land, Princess Belle-Belle is not alone in her misfortunes. If she is torn from the delights of her childhood; if the

fabric of fortune fall about her ears; if the grim order of destiny oblige her to pack up her traps, and be off and away from her earthly paradise—she does not go alone. The thunderbolts which strike one, strike many; the misfortunes which fall upon one, fall upon all her family; and the fair young princess, instead of bewailing her fate, must needs tuck up her sleeves, put on her oldest dress, and work with the rest and for the rest, oblivious, save when the respite of night brings time for thought, of all she has lost. Florio is gone. Ah! will he come back unchanged? The years are passing on; will they leave the cheek as fair, the eye as bright, the lips as ripe, the smile as ready, the dimples as deep? Poor Belle-Belle of reality! She forgets herself in her devotion to the rest; she lives out her life spending it for others. Hers is the self-denial which is the highest lot of poor humanity, and yet seems to us creatures of self the hardest and the saddest. When the winters have passed their appointed number; when her fair hair is touched with untimely grey; when the crows'-feet have fallen too early around her lustrous eyes; when her hands are rough with toil; when

her face—her sweet, comely face—is lined with care; when her shapely figure is shrunken; when the thousand little graces and delights of her maidenly ways are forgotten and lost—Florio returns. He comes back to his Belle-Belle, but, alas, he loves her no more. Down falls the castle of cards; the chambers of imagery are despoiled of all their golden pictures. Were it not for the vision that greets her streaming eyes, and comforts her stricken heart, poor Belle-Belle would be sorrowful indeed. But she has gained the higher glory. To those who wait and work comes a reward not hoped for or expected. The peace which passeth all understanding is theirs at last. Theirs are the soft strains of rejoicing resignation; theirs is a crown, if they care to wear it, more glorious than any wreath of the Nemæan games; theirs is the golden harp, with which to celebrate the mysterious victory over sorrow and disappointment—the solution of the problem insoluble to the world, the final triumph of Love over Pain.

We are on the highest slope of a breezy cliff, a foreland of the glorious coast which makes

North Devon the loveliest of English counties. The path, mounting straight up from the village below without any curve or winding, out of effeminate regard for the steepness of the hill, has left the thick hedges, which at its lower levels rise over it on each side, like an old arch out of which the keystone has dropped, but which yet preserves its stability. It has passed beyond the fringe of flowers on either hand—the tall foxglove, yellow hawkweed, pink herbrobert, and the white milfoil; it has emerged upon the open down, where it runs along the edge of the precipice, and looks out upon the tossing sea beneath and beyond. The great waves of the Channel show from this height no signs of motion, save in the white lines of crested foam and wild seahorses' manes that lie flecked about the surface; the steamer below, that is tossing and rolling as she plunges along, seems to be moving on a sea of molten glass; the clouds that fly across the sky cast their shadows before and behind them upon the waters; and the face of ocean, as you gaze upon it to its blue distances beyond, is as bright, as profound, and as impenetrable as the face of the Sphinx rising

out of the white sands and warmed with the cloudless sunshine of the desert. For that "multitudinous smile" which we quote so often is a subjective thing. We see in the ocean, as in nature, what we feel in ourselves: we are in a mood of laughter, and ocean smiles; we are in a mood of sadness, and ocean is grave; we are contemplative, and its face is like that of the owl-faced Athênê for unutterable wisdom. On either side the hill descends rapidly; on either side the view is nearly the same. To right and left is seen a circular cove, into which the waves rush through the narrow mouth and sweep back, dragging with them shingle, stones, drift-wood, seaweed—all the flotsam and jetsam of a wild coast. On either side are long jagged teeth of rock, lying in slanting strata, stuck at the entrance of the little bay like sharks' teeth, ready to grip and destroy. Behind the cove is the perpendicular face of the rock, with ledges on which grow wild rose, honeysuckle, blackberry, and bramble; and curving down to meet the sands slide the long slopes of the hill, planted thickly by the great gardener—Nature—with giant ferns, among which a tall man

would tramp, shoulder high, like some Titan among the palms of a tropical island. On the right hand is a narrow ledge of sand, with rock that crops up in dentated edges, and backed only by its bulwark of straight and steep precipice; and on the left is a hamlet, consisting of half a dozen cottages, and one pretty house standing by itself, apart from the rest. You may distinguish it without the aid of any glass in this bright and clear August sunlight. It is little more than a cottage, with its single storey rising above the verandah, which seems to run all round it; it is covered to its highest chimney pots with a flowing robe of clematis, fringed with westeria and Virginia creeper. It has a fair lawn in front, stretching away from the sea; and if you were near enough, you would see that its gardens are planted almost wholly with roses—roses of every colour: roses white and red, of York and of Lancaster; roses brighter than any that bloom in the gardens of Gulistan; roses of Provence and of Auvergne; roses of Gueldres, and roses of England.

Hard by the cottage is the church, never-failing adjunct of the English hamlet—a grey old

structure, too large for the scanty congregation which on Sunday gathers within its mouldering walls. The pathway slopes down the hill to join the cart road—a Slough of Despond in the winter, and in the summer a gridiron of Saint Laurence. This winds in and out among the houses; passes here by the mill-wheel, rolling slowly round under the light pressure of the streamlet, that drips rather than flows upon the broad feathers, and turns round the creaking, strong machine; here by the gate of the farm-yard, where the pigs lie poking contented noses into the reeking straw, content to believe that the days of transformation into bacon are yet far off, though the fiat has already been issued, and the knife of fate been sharpened; here by an orchard, red and yellow with the apples that will soon be gathered and sent to the cider-press; here by the village school, where the voices of the children are rising in the afternoon hymn of dismissal; and lastly down to the shore, where the ruts are lost in sand and shingle. It is high tide, or else you might see the carts gathering the seaweed, which is drifted up in heaps; but now the waves are beating and lash-

ing about the sides of the cove, and the one boat which belongs to Comb Leigh is tossing like a cork at anchor. If you look inland, you see a long valley stretching back far into the grey distance, where the mists of the summer afternoon lie over the hillsides, and wrap the trees that are nearer with the softness of a Claude landscape, and those that are farther with drapery of transparent muslin, through which, as through the Coan robe, you may see the leafy limbs all ranged in seemly order. The meadows lie between the trees—broad slopes, green with pasture land, or yellow with the ripened corn that waits to be cut. A fair English landscape, meaning peace and prosperity and the blessing of heaven and earth.

And on the cliff, on the very highest part, between the path and the precipice, where a gentle slope affords ten feet or so of breadth on which to lie and rest and watch the sea, are two young people.

One of them—she—is sitting pulling a flower carelessly, and the other—he—is lying at her feet, looking now upon the sea beneath him, and now at the fair face above him.

It is a face a little irregular of feature, though oval of form; the forehead is too high, the chin a trifle too pronounced, the nose not quite straight; and the whole is crowned with brown hair, with just—as the sunlight falls slantingly upon it—the smallest tinge of gold to give it colour and warmth. It is a face where you might expect a pair of bright and restless, mutinous eyes; in their stead you find them clear and steadfast of expression—eyes whose depths a painter, could he study them, might take as models for the illustration of many virtues, but chiefly those of courage, truth, and love. If I were to classify women, as my own sex has been so often classified by philosophers, I should divide her, first of all, into two great sections by means of her eyes. For the eyes of some women mean love, and of some an incapacity for love. The former are the sisters, wives, mothers, and aunts to whom children of all ages passionately cling; the others are those whom we respect, or love perhaps, *as in duty bound*, because they happen to be near to us. Their hearts are cold; they love themselves more than their own: if they have children, they neglect

them; if they have husbands, they slight them; if they have abilities or the faculty of imitation, they write movingly about domestic affections with that unreal twang that we know as well as the familiar gag of an actor. The girl sitting on the cliff had eyes that could love; they rested from time to time furtively upon the curly head by her knees, and on the comely limbs which lay stretched at full length upon the sward. Her head was bare, and in her lap lay the straw hat she had worn on her walk up the hill.

The young man broke the silence with a laugh.

"We have got metaphysical, Marion—another word for nonsensical. Have we nothing better to talk about after our long parting? And tell me, cannot you find some way of reconciling duty with pleasure?"

She turned her head a little to one side—girls in the country get these tricks and ways—while she thought a moment, before she answered—

"I do think that the way of duty is sometimes a very hard one. And when so many people are disappointed in the world, when we read of

so many lives falling short of their ideal, oh, surely it is better to give up thinking of life as bringing pleasure, and only make up our minds to bear and do what is right!"

"You to give up the pleasures of life, Marion? You—why, Democritus in—in—a brown holland frock and a red ribbon!"

"The ribbon is not red, but magenta."

"Matter of detail; and—and the prettiest little boots in the world."

She drew them back with a blush.

"Gerald, if life has pleasures and duties too, I think it has besides great nonsenses, which must not be allowed."

"Forgive me, Marion," he said, looking up with his frank smile. "Forgive me, and let me finish. Do you seriously propose to give up looking for happiness?"

"Ah, no," she replied, softening at once, and brightening like the face of a lake when the April cloud has passed. "No, it is not that, Gerald. I look forward to a great deal of happiness. I am happy now at home—I hope I shall be happy always, in some way or other; only I think it cannot be right to

set your entire heart upon one way of happiness."

"I do so set mine," said the young man. "Marion, I think life is full of joys and glorious gleams of happiness. They call it stormy. Nonsense! it is a Pacific Ocean for calm and sunniness. See now, I am six and twenty, or very nearly; you, Marion, are already two and twenty. We have walked and talked together for at least twelve years—how many unhappy days have we known?"

"None, Gerald, thank God!"

"And how many shall we know? None, Marion, none!" He sprang to his feet, and looked out upon the sea, where the sun was hastening to his western bed. "It is an invention of old women and cowards that misfortune is always hanging over us. Why should we pitch our songs in a minor key because bad things happen? They will not happen to us; and if they do, our singing penitential psalms will not alter the course of events. 'If I ever wanted a thing,' Byron used to pule and cry, 'I never got it.' Then why the deuce—I beg your pardon, Marion—why could he not

help himself to it? Did he expect it would drop into his mouth? I hate a man who sits and wishes, when he might be up and working. It is far better to have no wishes at all, to sit and wait like an Arab. I used to watch them, Marion, in the desert of Egypt, before I went to Brazil, under the blue sky of evening and night, in their attitude of dignity, while we smaller fry chattered. They are the only people who want nothing and hope for nothing; they accept and are contented. We who belong to a colder climate are for ever discontented with our lot; we grumble and struggle."

She laughed.

"No one, at least, will accuse you of being contented with things as they are. Are you as great a Radical as you used to be when you left us four years ago?"

"We are all Radicals at one and twenty, I suppose. But, Marion, I have found out now the truest happiness in life, and I mean to try for it."

"What is that, Gerald?"

"Marion, it is love."

She did not reply, but her cheek turned a

deep red; and presently she became aware, without looking up, that his eyes were fixed on her. If you know people very well, and are thinking of them, you get to feel when they are looking at you, without turning your own eyes to ascertain the fact. Perhaps this is elective affinity, or perhaps it is biology, or perhaps we know all about a thing when we can give it a fine name. Scientific gentlemen, it is certain, when they have once called a millstone by a Greek name, are instantly enabled to see several inches deeper than other folk into it.

"Love, Marion," he went on, sinking again on the grass, and gazing into her face—"love requires two people. Let us two love one another."

"We always have, Gerald," the girl murmured.

"Always, Marion. How many times have we climbed this hill together, and sat here looking at the sea! We have been lovers always, from the days when I had to help you along if you got tired. Always we have loved each other, Marion. But I did not know how much,

or with what kind of love, till I was coming back to England, and thought of you day and night. We used to be brother and sister, but we are that no more. The long separation has parted the old bond between us, but the new one has come in its place. I want you to be more to me than we have ever been before to each other. Marion, I want you to be my wife."

She was silent for a while.

"Tell me, dear, that you can love me with a warmer feeling than that of a sister for her brother."

She looked him straight and full in the face; there was no doubt, no hesitation there.

"I do love you, Gerald. I do not know how you want me to love you, but I am certain that no wife could ever love you more."

He took her hand and kissed it, softly at first, and then passionately.

"The thought has never been out of my mind, dear Marion, since I became a man. I have seen no other girl that I could love, and I resolved to tell you my heart the first day we were alone together. Yesterday I was afraid

to speak lest I might spoil all, lest I had made a mistake. Marion, we have made no mistake, have we? We love each other; we will give each other our lives. Speak to me, dearest!"

"If thy handmaid find favour in the eyes of my lord, and if—"

"No, Marion, you are not my servant; you are my princess and my queen."

And this time he did not kiss her hand, but drew her face down to his own, and pressed her lips to his. Marion's heart passed from her with the kiss, and she drew back blushing, confused, trembling.

Then Gerald began to tell her of the lives they would lead together, and the happiness before them; and, as he talked, Marion grew cold, and her heart fell. She shivered.

"I feel," she said, "as if I had lost something."

"It is your hand that you have lost, my darling, for that is given to me."

"Not that, Gerald, not that," she replied. "Let us go home; I am cold."

The clouds had gathered up from the south, and were lowering black before them as they

rose to go down the hill to Comb Leigh. Marion turned for another look at the sea: the waves were black, and the grey face of ocean was troubled with the crows'-feet of innumerable cares. There was no sunlight on the waters, and sea and cloud were blended together in the far horizon. Gerald passed his arm through hers, and led her gently down the hill.

"Don't be saddened by a rain cloud, Marion dear," he whispered. "Life has got nothing to do with weather. Look at the lightning up the valley! One might as well hear evil in the growling of the distant thunder."

"It is not the cloud," Marion replied, bursting into tears—"it is not the cloud, Gerald; but as you spoke to me, I knew that you loved me; I knew it was *coming*, and I felt so happy—oh, so happy!—all in a moment to know that you were really and truly my lover. I had not thought of it till the last few days, since you came home again, and we have been different to each other. And suddenly my happiness seemed to be dashed like a cup of water from my lips. What does it mean, Gerald? what does it mean?"

"It means that my Marion is the best and dearest of all the girls that ever lived, as well as the prettiest and sweetest. It means that she gave me her heart, and felt cold for a moment for want of it. And it means that my love is a little frightened to think what she has done, and all she has pledged herself to. See, dear, the clouds are rising again over the woods; there is the rift among them, and the bit of blue. Look at the glint of sunshine on the copper beech yonder. Everything is brighter for the rain, though it has been but a shower. See how the hills seem to start into light and colour again; that is a picture of our life, dear. Marion, Marion, stay here by the stile, and let me tell you again how I love you —so; let me press you in my arms. Dear, dear, dear Marion, how I love you—how I love you!"

It was two hours later when they reached the bottom of the lane—Marion bright again, laughing at herself, and animated.

At the gate of the Rosery they stopped.

"I must go home," said Gerald. "Tell your father what you like, dearest."

"I cannot say anything even to Adie, Gerald. Come and tell papa to-night. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, sweetheart, good-bye."

He pressed her hands, and looked her full in the face with eyes of passionate longing—a look that Marion was to treasure up in her heart for ever. The first tender words and the first warm look of a lover are as sacred to a woman as the first little shoes of her eldest born. It seemed as if his eyes were on her and his hands in hers still when she recovered from the first tumult of her heart, and lifted her eyes to watch her lover, striding along the road that led up the valley to Chacomb Hall.

CHAPTER II.

APTAIN REVEL, on half-pay, of her Majesty's Navy—that service which we treat so badly and regard so proudly—was not in any respect like the mariner Ben Bowling, or Admiral Benbow, or Lieutenant Luff, the sailors with whom the literature of imagination has made the world familiar. He did not wear loose blue trousers and a pilot coat, nor did he hitch up his garments in moments of aroused virtue, nor did he drink rum, nor did he swear, unless under provocation, nor did he stand habitually with his legs apart, nor did he have a red nose. He was a sailor of quite the modern school, though now a man of between fifty and sixty years of age; being a rather quiet and precise man, with little of the self-assertion that usually comes from habits of

command; modest of speech, and diffident in manner. He was pale, and had cheeks hollowed with study; short-sighted, and carried double glasses; and was absent, frequently wandering away from the topic, and having to be recalled by his daughter Marion. He was a student in literature and a dabbler in science, as great a gardener as Adam, and learned in flowers, especially roses, of which he had all the varieties that he could afford to buy. His face, with thin sharp features and delicately clear outlines, proclaimed his foreign extraction; for Captain Fabien de Lussac Revel was a Frenchman and the son of a Frenchman, although an English officer. Out of the great army of *émigrés*—who mostly, it must be confessed, left their country for their country's good—a few found commissions in the English navy, and fought as manfully against the France of the new *régime* as any Frenchman had ever fought under Jean Bart or Labourdonnaye. Among these was the Comte de Reville, who carried abnegation of his country so far as to Anglicise his name, and appeared on the Navy List as Lieutenant Revel. He never mounted any higher on the ladder of

promotion, but he put his son into the service and brought him up as an Englishman. Captain Revel preserved the papers which proved his ancestry and his title, in case he should ever wish to resume it, and pleased himself with the comfortable reflection that his race was an ancient and honourable one, with a history as long as its pedigree.

He came to Comb Leigh when he retired from the navy, some sixteen years before our story opens, with three children, his half-pay, and a modest patrimony. He had married twice. By the first marriage he had one child, Marion, now aged twenty-two; by the second he had a son Fred, now nearly twenty, and a daughter, Adrienne, now sixteen.

Marion you have seen. Of two girls one is always the daughter of the house, the father's friend and confidante—the ruler, if there is no mother; the prime minister, if there is; and in any case the teacher and adviser. This was Marion. As for the son Fred, he was at Oxford, where it was felt certain that he would achieve great things. Adrienne, little Adie, was the plaything and darling, and, like all darlings, childish

for her years, and exacting of much tenderness and sympathy.

It was a household full of tenderness. The captain was a soft-hearted man, fond of his children; the children, brought up in the seclusion of a happy valley into which the outer world penetrated rarely, believed that no one was so wise, so good, and so learned as their father. Those are the happiest families where all believe in each other, just as he is the happiest man who mostly believes in himself. The quality of self-conceit, if it is valuable for the individual, is priceless for the family. We all know those domestic circles, never tired of each other, in which Jack, otherwise a miracle of stupidity, is supposed to have the finest voice in the world; Tom, who got prizes at school, is the cleverest man in the world; Susan, the saucer-eyed, is the prettiest girl; and Jane, with a face like a frying-pan, the most remarkable. Marion Revel honestly believed that her brother Fred was far cleverer than his compeers, though he failed to get any prizes at all as a boy, and had not yet distinguished himself at college; while little Adie seemed to her the personifica-

tion of brightness, affection, and beauty. To the outer world, Fred Revel was a good-natured, handsome young fellow, who took things as easily as if he had been born to ten thousand a year; to the unprejudiced observer, Adie was a girl with a face which a few years might render beautiful, and a figure which required the ripening of two or three summers before you could pronounce an opinion on it. And, up to the present, if the captain has had any anxiety about his son's future, it has not crossed his lips. In truth, he has had none. When Fred refused at thirteen to go into the navy, his father was grieved, but let the boy have his way. When he grew older and resolved upon going to the University, the captain, convinced that education was the finest thing in the world, devised with Marion schemes of pinching and economy, to get for the boy all the advantages of learning. He is at present making the most of those advantages. He attends the college lectures, at which undergraduates learn so much and are so thankful for; he has, through the thoughtful kindness of Oxford tradesmen, a fair mount occasionally, a tolerable glass of

claret in his rooms, can give those little breakfasts by which the fatigues of study are dispelled, can decorate his apartment with costly engravings, and can partake in all the amusements of the place. Oxford and Cambridge are rich indeed in endowments, but they are richer in those fine philanthropists who force fine things upon inexperienced youth, and teach them lessons, never contemplated by the pious founders, in the luxury of that rich outer world to which few undergraduates will ever belong. Like so many of his kind, young Fred Revel, too, on his allowance of two hundred pounds a year, was living at the rate of a thousand in eight months, without as yet troubling himself as to what the end might be.

Ah, how pleasant it is, this paradise of the youthful fool, whose every banquet is a delight, and every noisy revelry a feast of reason! A dream from which the awaking may be bitter, but the recollection is sweet. We in England have much to be thankful for, and especially that we have two such places as Oxford and Cambridge, where for three years the poorest undergraduate may enjoy the privileges of un-

limited tick, and feel all the reality of being rich. A great English University is like a dream of fairy-land; in it those who work and are good boys and are lucky get pocketsful of money for all the rest of their lives; those who lie idling in the sun or sit singing in the shade are patted on the head by their tutors, tempted to eat, drink, and be merry by the benefactors above named, and troubled by no difficulties or debts till the allotted time runs out. So the Sheikh of the Mountains took his young men into an Eden, where houris brought them iced sherbet and played with them upon beds of roses for three days and three nights; then they were taken out, and paid the penalty for the brief season of joy by a life of obedience and slavery. After all, they could remember.

The girls knew nothing of this pleasantness; girls are taught, very properly, to believe that young men are always engaged in intense study when they are not discussing points of philosophy. Marion and Adie thought that Fred was hard at work. When he came home, resplendent in the gorgeous costume proper to the High, he wanted a long holiday, and must

put away his books. Moreover, he must tell them of the Oxford world. Fred was willing to listen to reason; during the vacations he was content to forego the improvement of his mind, and devoted himself, like the best of brothers, to boating, fishing, and his sisters.

This little Anglicised French family, living in the quietest place in all England, without any relations or connections in the country, where they had settled like Naomi in the tribe of Judah, had but one house where they could find intercourse with the outer world. It lay a mile and a half up the valley, and was called Chacomb Hall. There had been a hamlet of Chacomb and a race of Squire Chacombs from time immemorial. No Chacomb had ever distinguished himself; no event connected the place with the history of the country; the annals of the hamlet boasted no village Hampden, so that very likely there never was one there at all; and if there had been a Milton ever born among them, he was mute and inglorious, and so might just as well have been a Smith.

But for the Revels there was Gerald Chacomb.

He was older than Marion by some four years, and had been her only friend and chief companion. The two, when Gerald was at home for his holidays, roamed about the hills together like Paul and Virginia, as loving and as thoughtful of each other, though of sterner stuff than that sentimental and unfortunate couple. They knew every bird in the woods by its call, every wild flower, and every tree; they were wise in the manners and customs of the smaller beasts of prey—weasels and polecats and martens, and their like—which lie hidden in the Devonshire woods; they learned together by long familiarity that neglected science of woodcraft which no books can teach; and when the boy, obeying the instincts of his nature, took to reading works of travel and natural history, it was to Marion that he read them, filling her soul as well as his own with images of the strange wild animals of those Southern lands, dim with the haze of perpetual heat, filled with the haunted silence of a tropical noon, and bright with the splendour of cobra, panther, and jaguar. They sat side by side on the edge of the cliff, while Gerald read aloud of the mighty

river, across whose broad bosom the green and gold serpents glide in the blaze of the sun; on whose shores lies the lazy alligator; and to whose waters come to lap, at morning and at eve, the chattering monkey, the sleek puma, and the giant python.

"It is over there, Marion." Gerald would point across the sea. "Only three weeks' voyage, and we could get there and see it for ourselves. When I am a man I will go."

When he was a man he did go. Nothing could stop him. He left the University, and obtained a travelling fellowship, which, with the little fortune he had inherited from his mother, made him independent of his father's opposition.

Marion stayed at home, and tried to paint—it was her only accomplishment—the scenes which Gerald's letters described. She covered acres of paper with imaginary sketches, in which were reproduced his stories of the life he led upon the Amazons and Orinoco.

While he travelled, she, womanlike, looked on, watched, and waited, almost unconscious of the place he filled in her life.

Four years: it is a long time even in the life

of a man whose years are like a piled-up sheaf, and whose days are hastening the swifter to their autumn, as the waters hurry the faster as they near the fall; but it is a great gap indeed in that period when a girl is becoming a woman. Marion was eighteen when Gerald Chacomb went away, full then of the trembling perplexities and twilight visions of the future which surround the way of a girl. She was twenty-two when he came back, a woman ripe for love; and Gerald Chacomb was doubly a man, because he was a lover.

CHAPTER III.

GERALD CHACOMB strode with swinging step along the road up the valley to Chacomb Hall, his heart aglow, his eyes aflame, his lips trembling with the recollection of the last two hours. Nor did he trouble himself to wonder how his father might take it. That consideration, indeed, one must own, was not one that often stood in the way of his resolutions. His plan was rather to treat the paternal permission as a kind of grace after meat; to act first, and ask afterwards; to do, and then, with filial care that his father should have some part, to insure a kind of posthumous concurrence in the deed. And as he stepped along, his thoughts ran mainly on the life he would lead at Chacomb.

"The governor wants me to live at home and potter about among the Collection. Hang the Collection! Well, he will be happy. Marion will like to be near her own people, so she will be happy too. I should like to take her away with me somewhere, but I suppose that cannot be. My pretty Marion!"

About a mile from Comb Leigh he was awakened disagreeably from his meditations by the appearance of a man waiting for him by the roadside. He was a big, burly man, dressed in a fashion not often seen in the lanes of North Devon: a sober suit of black, with a tall hat; his long-tailed frock coat swung back from his big, brawny shoulders; and his waistcoat, as far removed from the M.B. type as is possible in a black waistcoat, showed an expanse of shirt front which might have been whiter; his trousers were wide and bulged at the knees, as if he sat writing in them with his feet under the chair, after the manner of those to whom Nature has not been prodigal in the matter of legs—though his were long; his hat was glossy, and yet not new; and he wore no gloves. In his hand he carried a silk

umbrella, which had seen slenderer days; and about the whole appearance of the man there was manifest the desire to preserve somehow a respectable exterior. His features were coarse and common, but not more vulgar than may be seen in many a man who is bidden to sit up high at great festivals. When he laughed, which was often, he laughed with the mouth, and not the eyes; when he smiled, the frequency of his smiles depending a good deal on the company he was in, he smiled with his lips, and showed his teeth. Strangers, who were apt to take a violent dislike to him at first sight, often found themselves before the evening was over talking confidentially to him, and next morning repented. His name was Joseph Chacomb, and he was Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, and first cousin to Mr. Chauncey Chacomb, the squire of Chacomb Hall.

"You here?" said Gerald, holding out his hand with no very cordial show.

"I am, as you see, my boy," returned the other. "And right glad to welcome the traveller home. Left the patients with a brother

poisoner. He is younger than I am, and his conscience is clearer. Came down last night as far as Exeter. You are looking in splendid condition. As for your father, he is a different man already. You know, my dear boy, his temper."

"Never mind my father's temper."

"I don't mind it. I am the only man who never did mind it. In fact, I rather like it. If I was his son, I dare say I should think a great deal of it. Being only Dr. Chacomb —Joe Chacomb—with a practice like a joint-stock company (Why? Because it's limited), I can afford to sit down and laugh. However, he has made a splendid addition to the Collection—an undoubted Dow, and he's now at home with it on his knees. My cousin Chauncey ought to have been a good father if he treated his baby—you, the only—as he treats his Collection. But then your head was not by an Old Master, eh?—after the manner of an Old Master."

Gerald was irritated, partly at a long-standing dislike of the man, and partly owing to the interruption to his thoughts, but he laughed.

"You are on your way home, I suppose. Captain Revel is with your father. It wants two hours of dinner. This Devonshire air, what an appetite it gives! If I lived here, I would have two dinners a day and a supper. It must be dreadful to be poor at Chacomb. Perhaps it is to escape their country appetite that so many people come up to London—that, and to get their medical attendance for nothing. Tell me about your travels, Gerald. Your beard improves you, and you've filled out about the shoulders. You are like your grandfather: he was a fair Chacomb. Your father is a black Chacomb. And I am a red Chacomb. We are nearly prismatic. All the colours of the family represented in us three. In the smoking-room to-night you shall tell me some of your adventures, eh?"

He winked, and looked so knowing that Gerald felt inclined to kick him.

"By Jove! I wish I had had your chances of seeing the world. But when I was one and twenty I was walking the hospital; and ever since I've been making blue pills and brewing black draughts. All the rest of the Phar-

macopœia is humbug, Gerald. With blue pills and black draughts I'd clear out half the sick wards of the hospital: beat doctors black and blue, eh? But never mind that. Tell me where you went, and all about it. The squire is hazy in geography. I believe he thinks Brazil is in Africa."

Presently they reached Chacomb Hall.

The Hall was approached by an avenue of elms, under which the carriage drive ran, grandly arched over by branches so close together that the crowded leaves supported each other, and remained upon the trees till January. The house stood on a slope: a great square modern house, with no pretensions to beauty save a western gable. This portion was built of brick—a warm and soft brick, over which years had spread a mellow tinge; two sides of it were clothed with ivy; the third looked due west down the valley to the sea; and in clear days—most days in North Devon are clear—you got a glimpse of Lundy in the far distance from the upper window. This bit, the last of the old Hall, had been mercifully preserved by that interposition of

Providence which killed the former squire—a great builder—and gave the estate to his cousin, Gerald's father.

Between Chauncey Chacomb as a young man and the estate there had once been so many lives, that in accepting a clerkship in Somerset House at a hundred a year, he thought himself provided with all the goods the gods would send him. *Dis aliter visum.* The owner of Chacomb had no children; the two intervening lives fell in; and Chauncey at thirty came into possession.

At thirty-five he took a wife. Also, about this period he began to form those Collections of his which, he felt, could make him famous. When he was thirty-seven his wife presented him with a son. The same *annus mirabilis* was also remarkable for the acquisition of a rose noble; an original Murillo, purchased through the agency and by the advice of Mr. Burls, the eminent picture dealer; the picking up of an ancient pike-head, which marvellously resembled the useful end of a modern spud; and for the death of his wife, who never recovered the effects of her confinement.

The Collection was the bugbear of Gerald Chacomb's boyish existence. He knew every glass case and its contents. He knew by heart the expository discourse with which his father would explain his treasures while he exhibited them to the unhappy wanderer whose steps brought him to the door. The cases were placed in what Mr. Chacomb called his library, though he never read, and his son had carried away the books to his own side of the house, the old portion. The Collection contained coins, flint implements, bronze ornaments, beads, swords and daggers, and a multifarious collection over which the rustic gaped and the antiquary yawned. For, in truth, Mr. Chacomb's Collection was as valueless a set of trumpery forgeries, worthless curios, modern antiques, and twopenny *bric-à-brac* as might be picked up at Cairo, Rome, Naples, Jerusalem, or any other place where the chief industry is that of forging ancient relics. No bishop of the twelfth century, travelling to Palestine for the good of his sinful soul, was more eager after saints' bones than Mr. Chacomb after any old fragment to which he could attach a history. He

had travelled, too, and brought home with him, after each voyage, stones from the places he had visited. These got a good deal mixed on the way; so that what had been a fragment from Luxor was exhibited as a specimen of the marble of the Acropolis at Athens, and what had been knocked off the long-suffering Sphinx was labelled as a stone from the Colosseum of Rome. Young Mr. Chacomb, too, in his irreverence for the past, had still further jumbled and confused things, by altering labels and changing stones—sins pardonable only on the score of youth and ignorance of archæology.

All his spare moments Mr. Chacomb devoted to writing the catalogue of his Collection. It was a bulky manuscript, which he constantly wrote, re-wrote, and corrected. Here was recorded the history of each precious relic, told at length, with all the circumstances connected with its find, and an *excursus* on the probable connection of the treasure with the political history of the period at which Mr. Chacomb's imagination chose to fix the date. The document was the repository of all that its author owned of fancy, history, or scholarship. His

reading, such as it was, bore perpetually upon his catalogue. He bought journals of the archæological societies, and he hunted them for new hints with which to embellish his catalogue.

On the walls of the room in which the Chacomb Collection was placed hung a dozen masterpieces, to which the squire added as opportunity offered.

"I have," he was wont to say, "only a few pictures, but I am proud to say that they are originals."

In one sense they were originals, having been mostly painted for Mr. Burls, and at the request of that distinguished collector, by young men in his employ; their natural merits being improved by a resemblance, perhaps accidental, to one or other of the great masters. Any one can copy a picture in a gallery, but it requires a painter of genius to produce an original work in the style of a master. Latterly, however, Mr. Burls had few dealings with his former patron; for Dr. Joseph Chacomb suddenly developed a curious taste in oil paintings, and became the fortunate means of introducing to his cousin one or two

chefs-d'œuvre of the very greatest value, which he obtained for him, on commission, at a comparatively small cost.

Gerald found his father, as usual, in the Collection. The glass cases were open; on the table stood his basin of water, his hydrochloric acid for treating the coins, his camel's-hair brush, and his labels. But instead of fussing, as usual, among them, the squire was sitting in an easy-chair by the window, nursing a blackened and smoke-dried picture in a tarnished gilt frame. And standing by him, eye-glasses in hand, was Captain Revel.

Mr. Chauncey Chacomb's appearance did not proclaim aloud his parentage of Gerald. For the son was fair and tall, square-shouldered and stalwart, while the father was short and dark. Gerald's face was round and comely, while his father's was sharp and hard. The squire, in fact, recalled the old portraits of Richard the Third. He had the same look of ability in the low, square forehead; the same cunning which the limner always depicts in the expression of that wicked Plantagenet: he was strong, like Richard; and, like Richard, he was

slightly deformed—though not in the same way, for his right shoulder was higher than his left. This gave his appearance an awkwardness to which no familiarity ever quite accustomed his friends. His manner was always cold, but with a studied civility. He smiled a good deal, but not so often nor in the same way as his cousin, the doctor; and he never deceived any living soul into the belief that he was going to commit, for him or her, an unselfish act. Chauncey Chacomb, as a clerk in the Admiralty, was unsocial and unpopular. When the news came of his cousin's death, there was an impious but intelligible expression of feeling among his fellows that so great a piece of fortune might have been bestowed more fitly upon one with more of the makings of a good fellow. As a lady supplies with ceruse, rouge, padding, and other artful agencies the deficiencies of Nature, so Mr. Chacomb learned to wreathe his face in habitual smiles, and assume a cordiality towards the world which he did not feel. He was not cynical, but indifferent. He did not sneer at people, nor was he envious of them, nor did he impute unworthy motives, nor did he say bitter

and carping things; he was only cold and careless. To the aims and objects of his kind, to the tendencies and movements of his time, to the sufferings and sorrows of men and women,—to these hopes and fears Chauncey Chacomb was dead. He loved but one created thing—not himself, because he was too conscious of his own defects to love Chauncey Chacomb, but his son; and he had only one vulnerable point at which his hide of indifference could be pierced by a simple pin's point—his invaluable Collection.

When the rhinoceros, at whom you may discharge your arrows and hurl your javelins till you are tired, actually feels the prick of one which by accident finds out a thin place in the hide carelessly flung across the creature's back, like a railway rug over a lady's knees, he begins to rage and roar, and makes things perilous for the black Nimrods in his neighbourhood. The rhinoceros, in fact, gets into a vulgar rage, and plays indiscriminate devilry. The elephant, on the other hand, if anybody hurts him, keeps his resentment to himself till the chance comes of paying off old scores. Then he puts his big foot

on the offender, who is seldom strong enough to preserve much rotundity after the operation, and pretends, with an apologetic twirl of his trunk, that it was by accident.

Mr. Chauncey Chacomb, not elephantine in any other respect, had the nature of that glorious creature in this, that he nursed his wrath. When he was offended he smiled, and, taking the injury night after night to bed with him, tenderly looked after it, fostered and fed it, kept it always alive and flourishing, and looked on admiringly while the little ugly monster grew up into a great amorphous Frankenstein.

He brooded over a wrong. He pleased himself with inventing schemes of imaginary revenge, on which he would gloat, picturing the agonies of the victim and his own ungodly triumph. Twenty years before this story begins, he had received, as he thought, a great injury and a wanton insult from a man who unthinkingly scoffed at his ancient arrow-heads, and disputed the authenticity of his beloved rose noble. The man who did it had long ago forgotten the whole thing, but in Chauncey Chacomb's mind it was flourishing like an ever-

green bay tree, growing ever taller and spreading wider, like a Norfolk Island pine. For twenty years he had been in almost daily intercourse with this man, dining at his table, walking and talking with him, asking and giving advice, receiving his confidences, and appearing, to all the rustic world of Comb Leigh, his dearest and most intimate friend.

And he hated him all the time. Day after day, and night after night, Chauncey Chacomb pursued the shadow of an imaginary revenge for an imagined injury. It was a sort of habit. Perhaps he would have done his enemy no harm had he found the opportunity. But the hatred, unforgivingness, and malice lay in his heart, like those little devils whom the magician puts into bottles—so lively and so harmless, *so long as the bottle is corked.*

This enemy who believed himself, who was believed by everybody, to be Chauncey Chacomb's greatest friend, was the man who stood by him, looking at the newly bought picture, when Gerald and the doctor came into the room.

CHAPTER IV.

"I THINK I should have it cleaned, Chacomb," the captain said, looking at the picture with puzzled eyes. "See what you make of it, Gerald."

At first sight nothing was to be made out of it at all, except a perfectly black surface, covered with a dull and much cracked varnish, set in a dingy frame. Mr. Chacomb placed it on a chair before the window, and began to move slowly before it in a semicircle, so as to catch the light from every possible point of view, holding his hands, after the manner of art critics, slightly curved over his eyes. His attitude was one of speechless admiration. The doctor, with a gleam on his face which might mean amusement, and might

mean incredulity, or, indeed, almost anything, took his place beside his cousin, and began a similar pantomime of observation with a grave countenance.

There was one thing especially noticeable about Dr. Chacomb, that the spirit of mimicry was so strong in him as sometimes to make him overact his part, and even to lead, by too zealous an impersonation, to the loss of many little *coups* carefully prepared beforehand. On the present occasion, with an involuntary glance at the other two, to see if they realized the humour of the situation, he crept with the squire slowly from left to right and from right to left, swaying his big shoulders and rolling his head, in grave imitation of his cousin, occasionally throwing in a gesture, a gasp, or an indication of rapture, as some hitherto unobserved beauty rewarded his inspection.

"What delicacy!" murmured Chauncey Chacomb.

"What fidelity!" echoed the doctor in a whisper.

"Splendid breadth of outline!" exclaimed the squire, bringing his forefinger round in a compre-

hensive circle, which finished by pointing to the fine proportions of the doctor.

"Majesty and height!" replied the doctor, with an upward sweep.

"You see it, Joseph?" said the squire.

"I do, Chauncey. Now that you point it out, I do."

"Then hang me," said the captain, who had no perception of the ridiculous—"hang me if I can see anything at all!"

Chauncey Chacomb answered not a word, but pointed to the centre of the panel.

Revel shook his head. The doctor sighed with pity, and nodded approbation.

"I suppose," said Gerald, "that we have not been able to catch the right light. I can see nothing at all; but I dare say I shall make it out presently. Perhaps there are duskier pictures even than this in galleries, and people admire them. Tell me what it is, father."

"I am studying it," replied Mr. Chacomb, solemnly. "There is a trunk, and—and—yes—it is a leg—an arm and hand, and what appears to be a head, but I am not quite sure. More delicate flesh tints I think I never

saw. Revel, it would be a sin to have this masterpiece touched. Look at that curve—see—Hogarth's line of beauty anticipated."

"I see," said the perverse captain, "a daub of drab-colour paint, that looks as if it had been laid on by the brush of a house painter. All the rest is black panel, varnished by an apprentice. Come, Chacomb, you do not surely mean us to admire this?"

"Not unless you like, Revel. Eh, Joseph? not unless he likes," said the squire, chuckling.

"Certainly, Captain Revel, no one can force you to admire anything," said the courtier. "Still, if delicacy and breadth of outline fail to please you, what will?"

"Tut, tut," said the captain; "I may be a fool, but I cannot see anything."

"Gerald," said his father, "look at it carefully. Come where I am standing; here, my boy. You *must* see that leg," he added, almost piteously.

"There is certainly something, but I cannot—my eye wants your training, father—I cannot make out what it is."

The captain whistled softly.

"Mr. Burls said it was a Dow, did he? Well, it may be a Do; but I don't think it is a Dow."

At this simple joke they all laughed, except the squire, who had not learned how any one could dare to laugh at a picture of the Collection.

"What do you propose to call it?" asked the captain.

"Burls believed it to be the Village Pork-shop," the doctor said, modestly. "He promised to bring up all the details by a new process if—"

"I won't have it cleaned," the squire interposed, putting his hands in his pockets, and falling back in admiration. "Nothing should induce me to have his confounded process, applied to this beautiful thing. What are you doing, Revel?"

The captain, turning it round, was tapping the back with his knuckles.

"It is odd," he said. "The panel seems double. Lend me a knife, Gerald."

He cut the paper, and loosened the nails which held the board to the frame. Then

behold a great marvel. For it was a false back, and behind it, on the reverse of the panel, lay the true picture, the back of which they had been admiring. A young girl's face, fresh as Etty, creamy as Greuze, bright as Titian, with the pearly tints of health and innocence—a beautiful painting, whose pigments were as unfaded as if they had been laid on the day before. It had been turned round for some purpose of preservation, and so had been left, forgotten and secure—guarded only by some tradition that it was a picture—and probably lying among a lot of lumber waiting for a purchaser.

"Why, in the name of all that's—" the captain turned it round and round—"here's the picture itself; and, by gad, Chacomb, we've been looking at the back!"

"Then it is a Dow, after all," cried the doctor, with much presence of mind. "Dow, you see, Gerald; *dos* in French—back—eh? Ho! ho! Chauncey, my boy, we've been sold! That rascal Burls! Wait till I get back to town, and have it out with him."

"It is the most extraordinary thing I ever

knew," said the captain. "And a sweet little painting, after all. Chacomb, you are in luck. This damsel's face strikes me as a good deal better than the delicate—ha! ha!—the delicate flesh tints and the fidelity of touch. I don't think—"

Here he caught a glimpse of the discomfited squire, and, though little prone to extravagant mirth, sat down and fairly bubbled over with laughter.

"The back of the picture, after all. Only the back! How about the flesh tints, eh? And the leg, and the line of beauty! The delicacy and the fidelity! Chacomb, we shall never forget it, never!"

When Don Quixote, the Knight of the Rueful Countenance, experienced that adventure of the fulling-mills, which is known to all who are acquainted with his biography, he showed no more melancholy spectacle of discomfiture than Chauncey Chacomb at this sudden collapse of his newly acquired masterpiece. His frame shrank; his hands hung down; his face was pale, save where the cheeks were flushed with an angry red. The doctor had retired. One

glance at his cousin had been too much for him; and stealing quietly through the window, he retired to a convenient spot out of sight, where he might sit down and laugh at his ease.

The captain turned the picture round, and set it in its proper place.

"This is almost worth sending to the papers," he said. "The prettiest little picture, too, Chacomb. Come, man, you can afford to laugh, because you have won. Why, this fresh, bright girl's face is worth all the sham Gerard Dows you could buy in a lump of Burls and all his people."

But Chauncey Chacomb was too disturbed to answer.

"Come, Chacomb, you are not angry, are you? Even the best judges get deceived sometimes. Though, of all the wonderful things—how Marion will laugh when I tell her! Now who could have suspected—who the deuce could tell that the thing was hindside before? I've seen a sailor get on horseback with his nose to the crupper; but hang me if I ever saw a picture stern on before!"

"Angry?" echoed the squire. "Angry? No, why should I be? As you say, we all make mistakes. My cousin there, for instance—"

"Oh, I," said the doctor cheerily, who had returned refreshed—"I was the first to make the mistake. It was I who put you all out. Laugh at me as much as ever you like, if you must laugh. Ho! ho!"

He laughed as if he was laughing at somebody else.

"Yes," said Chauncey, with woebegone face. "Ha! ha!"

It was an interjection with so little of the emotional and spontaneous character about it that the doctor laughed the louder.

"When I think of myself," he said, "in Burls's shop—I went there, you know, with this thing under my arm—I will never forgive Burls—never. 'What is it worth, Burls?' I asked him. 'It's worth—' Well, never mind the price Burls put upon it, because it would astonish you. 'It is a genuine Gerard Dow'—Burls's own words, not mine. 'A Gerard Dow; and I shouldn't wonder if it does not turn out to be the long-lost Village Porkshop.' The

long-lost Village Porkshop — think of that, Chauncey."

"I never heard of that picture," said the captain.

"Perhaps not," the doctor went on. "Very few people have."

This struck him as being a remark so true, and so apposite to the fable he was inventing, that he broke into a new laugh.

"Excuse me, Chauncey; you ought to laugh, not I. But I can't help it, for the life of me. What I thought were flesh tints, he said was dead pig. Never trust Burls again, Chauncey."

The squire's face relaxed.

"Of course I was deceived," he said, rather hoarsely. "And as for the picture, Joseph, you may take it back, and—"

"No, don't do that," said the captain. "The picture is really a good one. Look at it again, Chacomb. Do keep it if you can."

The squire shook his head gloomily.

"No; I shall send it back."

But he kept it all the same, and the picture still hangs in Chacomb Hall, where those who now own the place tell its strange story.

Then the captain looked at his watch, and went away, Gerald with him. Chauncey Chacomb listened to their voices outside the house. When their steps had died away, he turned to his cousin, who was expecting one of the sharp speeches which the head of the Chacomb house was accustomed to use in moments of displeasure to such of his relations as owed him money. It was annoying to the doctor, because he wanted to borrow more, and was most sincerely anxious that his cousin should be kept in good temper. But the squire was not thinking of him.

"It is envy, Joseph," he whispered, with a kind of groan—"it is malignant envy. I am richer than he is, and he envies me and sneers at me. You saw it, Joseph—you saw how his lips turned pale with envy when he found the picture hidden behind the frame. He envies me my money, he envies me my Collection, and he even envies me my son—my Gerald."

The doctor was entirely confused with this sudden and unexpected turn; he began, indeed, to murmur that it was highly creditable to the captain, but left off in time.

"If I were like other collectors," the squire went on, "I should be annoyed at such an incident. It might be a blot on my reputation; but I can afford to disregard that. It is not even that he should be able to make up a story out of it, and laugh at me. It is the man's real nature that I see through and despise. That is the contemptible thing."

"It is," sighed the doctor, getting interested. "That really is the saddest part of the whole affair."

"I am glad you noticed it as well as myself. Joseph, let us two have one more look at this picture—what he calls the back of it—eh? Put it in the light again—so. What do you think? Tell me candidly, Joe."

The doctor's eyes glistened as he caught the cue.

"Think? What I thought all along, Chauncey; though Revel put me out a little at first with his confounded discovery. The real picture is here, after all; just where we were looking at it."

He glanced doubtfully at his cousin. The assertion seemed too daring. But it was received with credulity.

"I *knew* it all along—I was certain of it. We can't deny the girl's head, Joe—any one can see that. A modern thing, put in by some copyist. Pretty enough, too. It wants eyes to see the other, though. Let us look at it again. Yes; Joe, you are quite sure—are you quite sure that you see the details?"

"As sure as I was at the very first."

This, at least, was true.

"Ah, now it is our turn to triumph! Joe, if he makes a story out of it—'good enough to send to the papers,' Revel said—if he does, we shall have the laugh over him, eh? After all, you can't take in the real connoisseur."

"Burls would hardly go so far as to see a picture when there was none. I rely more on Burls and yourself than on my own eyes. But, there it is—why, Lord bless me, how can Revel—"

"Spite and envy, Joe; it is what we must expect in the world. Ah, sometimes one would be a hermit."

"You feel things too much, Chauncey. It is the goodness, you see, of your heart that runs away with you."

"Perhaps, Joseph, perhaps."

He had spoken in a braggart, self-satisfied voice; but in putting the picture down, he laid it with the face upwards.

"Now," said the doctor, when the squire left him to dress for dinner, "I wish for once that I knew a little of my own profession. Chauncey has got a twist somewhere to-day. I thought he would have had a fit when Revel went away. Perhaps it is his heart going wrong, if I only knew it. Too much goodness—ho! ho! Humbug won't teach me, however, what I should like to find out. It is a good thing enough for the workaday world. Humbug doctors sick people; humbug makes them thankful when they get well again; humbug even, sometimes, makes them happy to go off; humbug fills my scanty coffers; humbug makes my clients believe in a couple of capital letters and a red lamp; but humbug breaks down when you want it to be uncommercially useful. It pays all my bills, but it won't help me to read the problem of Chauncey Chacomb. Is he cracked? Has my cousin dropped a tile? None of the family ever showed any inclination to mania. But

it looks queer. He rounds on his dearest friend, and slangs him. He gets as mad as a badger in a cask, without even being baited with the rubbish and the general foolishness of the Collection. As for this picture, which I bought without looking at—who the devil would have thought that a picture could be hindside before? However, Joe, my boy, you have not done so badly. You have sold it for ten times what you gave. You have had a holiday from the infernal shop; you have got your travelling expenses paid, with a trifle over; you are in hopes of borrowing the hundred pounds your creditors want so badly; and you have got a whole bottle of port before you. I don't think, on the whole, that the original Joseph, in his palmiest and artfulest days, could have done much better for himself with Pharaoh than I have with Chauncey. And then," he added, with some confusion as to scriptural sequence, "there is certainly no Potiphar's wife in North Devon. Potiphar lives in London."

Chauncey Chacomb locked the door with extreme care in his own room, and then abandoned himself, with all the pleasure of a secret

voluptuary, to the rapture of unbridled rage. He strode backwards and forwards, swinging his arms, cracking his fingers, dancing, gesticulating, with fiercely glaring eyes, as he gave full play to a revenge worthy of the Furies, devising schemes of retaliation in which he had his enemy at his feet and crouching before him. I believe, and am firmly convinced, that if one half of the world were judges, the other half would be condemned to undying torment; else why the frequent "damn"? But then, the usurpers of the throne of Minos, lacking that functionary's judicial coldness, would presently repent and be sorry. To be sure, their repentance would not make the fatigues of Sisyphus, toiling after his aggravating stone, a whit more endurable; but, to the philosopher, the picture of judges and prisoners, both justly unhappy together, might not be without its useful lesson. At this moment, Chauncey Chacomb believed that, if an opportunity should occur, there would be nothing in the way of revenge too dreadful to resolve upon. The laugh of the captain had fallen upon his nerves like the lecturer's oxygen upon the wire in the glass—that instructive

experiment which we used to see at lectures before chemistry was taught in schools—rousing and stimulating the dull spark to a flame.

It is one of the advantages of a small place, where society is limited necessarily to a circle of two or three, that the soil adapts itself especially to the growth of the passion flowers of envy and suspicion. In great cities they are reared with extreme difficulty, and kept alive only with watchfulness and attention. But in the country they grow like the giant lianes in the tropics, twisting and twirling, strengthening and increasing, till they squeeze the spiritual life out of the tree which has been their host.

In London we hate each other honestly, particularly we who have reviewed each other's books, and been reviewed: it is a keen emotion, but seldom roused. Nobbs hates Dobbs; when Nobbs meets Dobbs his liver is stirred to the extent of wishing he could knock him down, were he strong enough and were no one looking. If Dobbs is spoken of, Nobbs coarsely swears if he is of the old school, or calmly smiles—the smile of superior venom—if he belongs to the party of sweetness and light. For the rest,

neither Nobbs nor Dobbs wastes time in thinking of each other. But in the solitudes of the country, hatred may become a cherished and a beautiful possession, the priceless pearl of imagination, the salt and spice of life, the chief thing which confers superiority, dignity, and the sense of power.

"I could kill him now where I stand," said the wry-necked little squire, who, like the majority of mankind, felt most largely the gifts of bull-dog tenacity and reckless daring when there was nothing present on which to exercise them. "I could kill him now, with his cold laugh and his sneer. He thinks I am his friend; how can I undeceive him? He thinks he can do what he likes with me; how can I show him the truth? He thinks he can direct and order me; how can I let him know—Gar! If I could crush him to powder beneath my feet; if I could sell him up, and send him and his beggars upon the streets; if I could ruin his name; if I could blight his hopes—I would do it. If, unknown to all the world, I could compass his end—I would—yes, yes, yes, I would do that too!"

And the squire burst into a short laugh, not the laugh of irony, or that of conscious power —these being impossible, except in works of fiction—but a laugh of pretended amusement combined with spite: it is a laugh that may be heard any day among men discussing those of their friends who are in the same trade with themselves. Its invention is said to be due to Sir Fretful Plagiary; but my own belief is that the distinguished dramatist appropriated that, as well as other beauties, from older men. Lucian, to my certain knowledge, laughs in much the same way, and perhaps earlier authors handed down the method to him. Chauncey Chacomb laughed, hitching up his uneven shoulder with an action which seemed like imparting a confidence to his right ear. Then he opened a secret drawer in an escritoire by touching a spring. In it, among a lot of old jewellery and trifles, lay the most commonplace of all worldly possessions—a simple box, labelled "Cockle's Antibilious Pills." This he took out and opened, gazing at the contents with a look which amounted almost to rapture. To the superficial observer the box contained only

those blue-black globules and the nasty white magnesia, put in by the philanthropic manufacturer to deter us from taking too many. To Chauncey Chacomb the box spoke a whole volume, in folio, of evil imagination and back-handed revenge.

"I wonder which of them it is," he said, sitting down and shaking up the pills. "Who would think that it lies among the rest, so like them all that the Devil himself could not tell which it was. There were a lot of pale yellow crystals—poisonous little deadly crystals—in a drawer in the laboratory which Joseph showed me. When nobody was looking I took a pinch. And in the night I made up a pill, rolling up the crystals in the middle of coloured bread so that it looked like a Cockle. He who takes that pill will have pains and convulsions all over; and then he will bend back, like a bow turned the wrong way, with his heels touching the back of his head; and then he will go off altogether. Ha! Revel would look well with his heels kicking the back of his head. And dignified. Just as he was having his final curl, I could whisper softly in his ear that I had

done it, and that it was a lesson to teach him for the future not to sneer and flout at better men—yes, better men than himself.

"It would be dangerous, because some one else might take the pill, and I bear no malice to any one else. Revel is my only enemy. Perhaps the girls don't take Cockle's. But then Fred might. If I could make sure that only the captain would use the box, I could leave it on his dressing table. And I should watch and wait. A week, a month, a year would pass, and the captain would be strong and well. Then would come a day when he would feel a little queer. And then—then—then—ah-h!"

He gave a sigh of infinite satisfaction, and closed the box, gazing at it with loving eyes, such as a mediæval bravo might have turned, after purging his soul by confession, upon his sharp and trusty stiletto. Then he replaced it in the escritoire, and locked up all safe. And then he rubbed his hands softly, dressed for dinner, and went downstairs just as the gong sounded.

For the moment, his ill-temper and malice had vanished. They came from time to time,

like those familiars, formerly the plague of foolish old women, who, to be fed, sold their ridiculous souls to the Devil. Chauncey Chacomb allayed their voracity with dreams and schemes of revenge. Perhaps, had he been induced to carry his visions into reality, there would have been nothing left to dream about, and so the world would have become a thirsty Sahara of actual fact. The Tempter insinuates his abominable counsels into some of us with fancied evil. We dream of crime and wild revenge, wearying, not satiating, the worst passions of the soul; and to some the vision is dearer than one of luxury, pride, glory, honour, or even fair women.

The squire, then, having indulged his genius, fed his familiar, smoothed his mind, and crushed his imaginary enemy, came down to dinner in better temper. The doctor was cheerful, as he always was at dinner-time. Gerald was happy, if a little silent, and the talk went round as if no one of all three had a single thought in the background. This, you see, is the grandest achievement which our modern civilization has wrought for us. It has enabled us to use speech

so as to forget care, as well, according to the cynic, as to conceal thought. The squire put his secret hatred behind him; the doctor forgot his anxieties about money; and Gerald, as hungry as a man of five and twenty ought to be, forgot Marion.

As soon as dinner was over, the younger man left the other two with the wine, and went out. Presently they heard him crunching the gravel-walk beneath the elms. The squire's eyes contracted with an impatient expression.

"Not back three days," he said, "and off again to the cottage. You see, Joseph—you see! He cannot be allowed to spend a single evening with his father. Revel entices him away."

"There are other attractions at the cottage besides Revel; there are two young ladies."

"Cousin Joseph," said the squire, "do you forget that you are speaking to a Chacomb, that you yourself are a Chacomb, and that Captain Revel is a mere half-pay officer?"

"Cousin Chauncey," returned the doctor, unabashed, "I remember that the Chacombs have been owners of this pleasant and secluded little

hamlet for a large number of generations. During that time they have done nothing to distinguish themselves, except to show that they can hold on to what they have got. Do you forget that Captain Revel is the last representative of an ancient and honourable French house?"

"Bah!—a beggarly French title!"

"Whose ancestors were fighting men with the king, while ours were ploughing Devonshire clays. So far as family goes, my cousin, we must give in. To be sure, we—that is, you—have got money."

"I would rather give it all to—to—to you, Joseph," said Chauncey, flushing, "than that Gerald should have a penny if he marries one of those Revel girls."

"Ay, ay?" the doctor replied, thoughtfully. Then he looked up and laughed.

"To be sure, Chauncey, if you were going off before me, which isn't likely, comparing your constitution and mine"—he was as strong as one of the New Forest oaks, to look at—"I should say, leave me your money, by all means. Still, if you do not want mischief to be

done, you might perhaps keep Gerald out of the way of it. You know that the best method of handling the patent safety matches is not to let them get near the outside of the box, eh?"

Here the squire banged the table, and used a strong expression—what some writers used to call a Saxon expression, until we were taught that there never were any Saxons at all, and reflected besides that the word is really of Latin origin.

"Everybody would think," the doctor went on, with a half-glance at his cousin's face, "that you wanted it. You and the captain are bosom friends; you go there, he comes here; the girls come here when they like; you— No, Chauncey, you really should not bang the table when all the glasses are on it. You have spilt some of my port on the cloth—a sinful waste of excellent wine. Before you bang again, allow me to take another sip."

"Finish the bottle," said Chauncey, rising abruptly; "I shall go into the garden."

He left his guest, and, passing through the open window, stepped out upon the lawn.

The doctor looked after him with a smile, and gave up his whole mind to quiet enjoyment of the port. When there was no longer any in the decanter, he rose thoughtfully, and followed his host.

Chauncey Chacomb was marching backwards and forwards, gesticulating. The devils, which had slept for a while, were awake again, and rending him to pieces. It was singular that the secret he had kept for so many years should be irresistibly torn from him by so foolish an accident as that of the picture. But it was so. He could no longer contain himself or his passion. Every feeling which overmasters a man must, soon or late, find expression, and take unto itself a confidant.

"Come, Chauncey," said the doctor, taking him by the arm. "I am a medical man, you know, and cannot have you exciting yourself. Relieve your mind, and have done with it. 'Give sorrow words,' as Shakspeare says; and if you don't tell me, tell somebody else. What a man like you, in good health, with a fine income and no debts, can have to trouble him, I don't know. But you have something. Re-

pressed care, my friend, is like suppressed gout —it plays the devil with the constitution. That's why they say that care killed a cat, I suppose. I had a case last week of a man, about your age, but of slighter build, who choked, Chauncey, literally choked, not to use the technical term, with the effort of keeping something on his mind. As he was dying, he tried to communicate it to me; but too late, poor fellow, too late!—and he is gone. I believe if he had lived I should have come in for something handsome in his will. There is another man I attend every day, who is paralyzed in the lower limbs through getting into a righteous rage with his son, and trying to keep it under. Give Nature way, Chauncey. You are annoyed, and very naturally, because Revel found out what had escaped you and me—eh? Bah! Sit down and swear for five minutes, and then forget it."

"Oh, if I could trust you!" groaned the squire.

"That seems an odd thing to say, after all these years. Not trust me? Why, who the deuce have you ever trusted except me? Who

helped you to get the Collection together? Who watched and lay in wait for bargains for you? Who stood between you and my lady when you had the kick-up? Who has always been your best friend? In the words of the poet,

> "Who bailed him when they ran him in?
> Who backed the bill and nailed the tin?
> Who never flinched through thick and thin?
> His cousin."

Not that you were ever run in, Chauncey—on the contrary, I believe it was I who once—but never mind. The meaning is clear. Come, old fellow, out with it. Make a clean breast, or you will be having—you'll be having—" he paused to think what he could best frighten his cousin with—" you will be having *angina pectoris.* That's a thing that comes of sudden excitement. It catches you in the heart like the five claws of a wild beast; grips there, and never lets go till it has torn it all to pieces; and you die after five and twenty minutes of agony. Give me your wrist. So. Good Heaven! a hundred and twenty to the minute. And now put out your tongue. My poor Chauncey, you

must take care, you must indeed. I think I ought to bleed you."

Chauncey sat down and gasped.

"I hate him, Joe," he said. "I hate him worse than I hate mortal sin. Don't tell any one, but I hate him."

"Who? Gerald?"

"No—Revel, Revel! I've hated him for fifteen years."

The doctor looked at him with a puzzled expression. He saw for the moment no possible way to make anything for himself out of this revelation.

"He tramples on me; he insults me before my own son; he sneers at me; he gives himself airs of superiority. I hate him!"

The doctor remained thoughtful for a little while. Then he spoke professionally.

"Come up to town; go and travel; see other scenes and other people. If you hate Revel when you return, come to me again. No"—for the squire was going to speak again—"no, you have told me quite enough. I thought there might have been some reason; I mean—yes—tell me of something else."

The squire shrank back into himself again.

"Promise me, Joseph," he said, catching him helplessly by the hand, "that you will keep my secret. I can't help it," he added, piteously —"I can't indeed. The sight of him makes me mad. I want to kill him; I want to do him mischief. I lie awake and think about it at night. Tell me, Joe—you know I have always told you everything — we have no secrets from each other, have we? We never had."

"None, Chauncey, none," replied the mendacious physician, whose pocket-book was bulging with secrets unsuspected by his cousin. "I am thankful to say that I have always been as open with you as you with me—as open with you as you with me," he repeated, pleased with the roundness of the phrase.

"Then, Joe, tell me if you meant what you said—if you think there is any chance—any danger of Gerald falling in love with that Marion girl. If there were, I would—"

"What would you do, Chauncey?"

"I would cut him off with a shilling, Joe. I would leave all my money to you, I would, by

gad—Chacomb Hall, and the Collection, and everything."

The doctor looked round him. They were in the centre of the lawn: behind him stood the Hall; before him stood the great trees of the avenue; on either hand stretched long green glades up the hillside; a sweet breath of summer was in the air; the sun was long gone down, and only the light sapphire hues of evening left in the west; but the moon was up—the full August moon, the harvest moon—pouring floods of silver light on wood and copse, softening the straight lines of the modern part of the Hall, and bringing out into relief every buttress and projection of the old western gable as lovingly as if they had belonged to Melrose Abbey. There was a deep stillness in the woods. To the doctor's heart, weary with struggle, trouble, and the endless fight that belongs to a man who is ever sinning and ever trying to escape the consequences of his sin, the squire's words brought a sudden hope like a ray of sunshine.

"Answer me, Joseph. Have you reason?"

"Perhaps, Chauncey, perhaps," said the doc-

tor. "So you would cut off your own flesh and blood for a marriage against your permission?"

"I would. Mind you, Joe, Chacomb belongs to the Chacombs. If Gerald does not get it, it goes to you."

"Lord, Lord!" said the doctor, "we talk nonsense. You are only sixteen years older than I —and will outlive me. Put such things out of your mind. As for Gerald, of course he will marry to please you—sons always do," he added, in a sort of undertone. "Come in, Chauncey. Let us have some brandy and water after this cold talk. I must doctor you. And don't trouble yourself about Revel for a while. Control yourself, my cousin. We Chacombs should be strong to act, but slow to speak. Your secrets are safe with me."

Gerald came home at twelve, and found the doctor smoking a cigar outside the house.

They walked up and down together in the calm night.

"If I were you, Gerald, my boy," said the doctor, "I should marry. It has always been

my greatest regret that I did not marry. Get yourself a wife, and soon."

"I mean to," said Gerald.

"Very proper. And I hope you will have the good sense to choose the right girl."

"I have chosen, if I may say so, the best and sweetest girl in all the world. I've known her nearly all her life, and there can be no mistake about her being the right girl."

"I am *very* glad to hear it, Gerald, very glad; and I am sure your father will be greatly pleased—greatly pleased. Good night, my dear boy, good night."

CHAPTER V.

IF there were rage and fury at the Hall, at the Rosery it was all love and calm.

Gerald and Marion were together on the sands, which the receding tide had left dry: without, the wavelets followed each other, caressing the beach and lapping gently against the edges of the great sharp rocks; the softest of moons was over their heads, the softest of breezes playing in their faces. Together they strolled hand in hand, with the soft warm pressure of early love. A woman unthinkingly lends her hand to be caressed, and, lo! her fond heart straightway glows with thoughts of unutterable happiness, and her charmed thoughts hover about the image of her lover, like the silly pigeon round the enchantress ser-

pent. They were silent, because there was nothing to say. The immoral grammarians of every tongue have with one consent placed the verb *to love* first of all the conjugations, so that those who read may learn more things than grammar—*Io t' amo, je t' aime*, and all the rest. That said, little is left but to say it again, or to be silent while the pulses vibrate from one to the other, singing speechlessly, like the trembling strings of Anacreon's lyre, nothing but love, love, love, which swears to be unchanging and eternal.

From the cottage came the sound of a piano. Adie was playing, while her father was reading. Presently the music ceased, and everything was still save the ripple of the waves.

"I suppose we ought to go in, Marion," said Gerald. "Reflect, dear, before we tell the world. There is yet time to reflect; no one has heard your promise but me. Think it all over again, and tell me, dearest, once more if you can love me."

There are many thousand stories yet to be written about human life, although so many thousand exist already. Fate shakes up the

great kaleidoscope, and produces combinations without number; but there is one which never tires. On such a night a youth told a maiden that he loved her; on such a night she threw her white arms round his neck, and with self-abandonment most maidenly and pure, laid her face against his face, as he stooped his head to meet it, and whispered words, while her heart beat with the tumult of strange and new feelings, which were never to be forgotten or recalled.

"Gerald, you know that I love you, and—oh, gently, gently, Gerald dear."

He led her, trembling and glowing, back to her father's house, daughter still, but yet not quite the same. For maid Marion was pledged, and the golden cestus was ready to be loosed.

They found Adie standing on the steps of the verandah. She is a girl of sixteen—the age when childhood and maidenhood meet, and make each other ashamed, as the old thoughts of the one are beaten back by the new-born thoughts of the other; a tall and lithe damsel, with thin long limbs which want filling out. She is unlike her sister at every point. Her fea-

tures are straighter and clearer; her blue eyes are bright, but they want the depth of Marion's; her fair hair hangs, as a young maiden's should, loose about her shoulders; she carries her head with a certain defiant haughtiness, unlike her sister's modest pose; and while Marion's lips are closed with the earnestness of duty and resolve, Adrienne's are lightly parted, as if catching at some unknown pleasure.

"You *are* come back, then!" she cried, petulantly. "Gerald, it is too bad. Only home three days, and you monopolize Marion the whole afternoon and evening. No, sir, I am too big to be kissed now; and I don't want my hair pulled, thank you. And, Marion, something has happened. Fred has written to papa, and there is a big bundle of letters come from Oxford, and papa is put out."

Marion's heart fell. Her brother Fred was one of that too numerous class of correspondents who write only when, as Adrienne said, "something has happened." That, in our euphemistic manner of speech, means something bad.

"What is it, Adie?"

"I do not know. The letter was brought this

afternoon, but stupid Susan forgot to give it to papa till this evening. He turned quite pale when he read it, and of course won't tell me anything. Go in, Marion, and say what you can for poor Fred. I suppose he is in another scrape. Fred never writes unless he is in a scrape, Gerald. And ever since I have been old enough to be told things, the dear boy always has been in a scrape."

Marion, troubled, went into the drawing-room, where her father was sitting at his own table with a pile of papers before him. It was the family room. It was long, low, and narrow: it had a piano, a bookcase, and a table—the captain's—covered with books. It was Marion's studio, Adie's practising-room, and their father's library, all in one. When Fred was at home it was his lounging-room as well. Captain Revel's face, as he sat before the lamp and read his letters, was pale, and his hand trembled.

"Come in, my dear. Is that Gerald outside?"

"What is it, papa?"

"Call Gerald, Marion. We want his advice. Gerald, help me if you can. We are simple people here," he said, bitterly, "and do not

understand the ways of the learned world. Read my son's letter, and advise me what I am to do. Listen, Marion, my child. It is your brother's latest freak."

Gerald read—

"MY DEAR FATHER—I am sorry to have to tell you that I got into a mess at Oxford last June. I did not like to let you know the truth at the beginning of the Long, and I hoped the tutor would manage to get me out of it. But I find that he cannot. Perhaps he has himself written to you by this time. The fact is, I was rusticated for a year for a little escapade in which I foolishly joined. Lord Rodney Benbow was the other man. We laid a train of powder round the court for a firework, which no one would have cared very much about, only Rodney would finish it up with a cracker or two at the Dean's door. The porter saw us, and gave information. So the Dons had us up, and made unpleasant remarks; and we were rusticated. I hope you will not be greatly annoyed. It will delay my degree for a twelvemonth, but that is all. You will be glad to learn that I have en-

joyed the reading party greatly. We had good fishing, and very good fun all round. Lord Rodney wants me to join him in a journey up the Nile, and to the East, to last till the expiration of our sentence. He very kindly offers to bear most of the expenses. But of course I cannot accept his invitation till I hear from you, as I cannot ask him to pay the travelling fares. Rustication is not so very awful a thing, after all; and I dare say we shall get over it. Tell me if you would like me to run down to the Comb before we start for Egypt. Love to Marion and my little Adie.—Your affectionate son,

"FREDERICK REVEL."

"Oxford is a place where young men are sent to receive the highest education the world can give," said Captain Revel, "and at twenty years of age they behave like naval cadets. He calls a public disgrace nothing. He talks of losing a year as if it was nothing. And he offers to go out to Egypt as if it was a part of the course. Gerald, you know all our family secrets—if we have any secrets. Advise me what to do."

Gerald hesitated.

"After all, it is hardly a disgrace, sir," he began.

"Not a disgrace? Not a disgrace for a man of twenty to be firing crackers at his superior officer's door like a boy of twelve? Why, at twenty I was cutting out slavers on the West Coast. It may be no disgrace at Oxford, but it is a sore disgrace at Comb Leigh."

"I mean," said Gerald, "that the offence is foolish enough, but not—not—in fact, it might have been worse."

"The boy is light-headed," groaned the captain. "A feather turns him: he has no more will than the shuttlecock; he—"

"Papa," said Marion, "don't be too hard on poor Fred."

"It was for Oxford," the captain went on, pacing up and down the room, "that we saved and scraped, Marion and I—"

"Oh, never mind that, papa!"

"It was to give him the best start in life that a lad can have, and the best education, that I denied my girl here the training that she deserved. We pinched in her dress and in our living, Gerald; we made Marion governess to

Adie when she ought to have been herself at school; we have lived cooped up in this little village when I might have taken her to see something of the world,—in order that Fred might have the means of going to a public school and the University. And this is the end of it. He was to have brought credit on the old name—a name older and more honourable on the other side of the water than yours, Gerald, my boy—he was to be the pride of all of us; and see what it has all come to. Look at it, Marion—think of it."

"Nay, sir," said Gerald, "all is not lost because Fred has been unluckily foolish."

"All is not lost? No. All would not be lost if the boy would work, but he will not. This is the last blow. Fred has spent all our savings, Marion, my dear. There is nothing left. You did not read his postscript, Gerald. He tells me the tutor has sent on his bills. And here they are. He adds a remark that they may wait."

"Oh, Gerald," murmured Marion, "say something to help."

May I look at the bills, sir?"

"Look at them all. It is a pretty collection for one year of Oxford life. Champagne, claret, water-colours, engravings, boats, horses, for the son of a half-pay officer! You have been at Oxford, Gerald. Tell me, if you can, that all young men are so."

Gerald was silent for a while.

"Fred has been extravagant," he said. "Let us own that he has been as foolish as a man well can be. Still, he is but twenty."

"But twenty? Yes, with a long life before him, and, like a ship with no ballast to keep her steady, without principle."

"Oh, papa!"

"Marion, shuffling words do not alter facts. Fred's life is before him, and what will he do with it? 'Unstable as water, he shall not excel.'"

"Let the debts wait," said Gerald. "As he has contracted them, let him do what many a man has to do—pay them afterwards. They will be a log about his neck for years; but he will have to pay them in the long run."

"No, Gerald," said the captain, "we will not do that; will we, Marion? We will not let a

pack of cheating horse-dealers and rascals make jokes on the name of Revel. We will pay them every farthing, if we starve for it ourselves. But he must never set foot again in Oxford."

"Perhaps," said Gerald, hesitatingly—"perhaps, captain—if—if—if you would let me make terms with these fellows—"

"Thank you, Gerald; but I will not borrow of you. If I want a loan, I will ask your father, my old friend. He will do it for me. Fred's debts shall be paid. But the debts are nothing, nothing—we can scrape for a few years more, and settle them. As for the boy, all the world knows already, I suppose, that he is rusticated—all the world except ourselves. He came home, sir, with the shame of the thing still upon him, to play and sing and laugh with the girls whose money he had wasted; and not a word to me, though he knew I must learn it, sooner or later. Marion, say, if you can, something in excuse for your brother. I can find nothing."

Marion's tears came into her eyes, but she could not say a word. It was all too cruel.

"And he wants to travel—as a reward, I suppose, for his folly," said the captain, bitterly.

"I know what I will do: I will see your father, Gerald, and borrow the money from him to pay off all in full. I will go up to town myself, take the boy down to Oxford, and settle up every liability. Then he shall apologize to the college authorities, and take his name off the boards. I sent him there to work; and since he will only play, he may come to Comb Leigh and lay trains of gunpowder round the cove, if he likes. They cost less here."

Marion looked at Gerald.

"Perhaps, sir," he said, "I may be able to arrange for you. Let me go to town and see him. Let me bring Fred home to you. And —and—Captain Revel—perhaps a word or two of kindness may affect him more deeply than anger. You were good enough to take me into your confidence, you know."

"Aye, Gerald, aye; you can say what you like in this house."

"May I, sir? Then let me say another thing, though it is not a favourable moment. Captain Revel, accept me as another son."

He took Marion's hand.

"I asked this dear girl to-day," he went on,

"to be my wife. Will you consent if she will—since she does?"

"Marion, Gerald, I did not look for this!"

The captain was silent for a while. The two stood before him like a pair of prisoners waiting their sentence. When he spoke, it was with the voice and look of one whose thoughts are far off.

"When Marion was born, I was angry and disappointed that the child was not a boy. When Fred was born, I rejoiced, because the old line might still be carried on. Fred's mother—well, never mind. Marion and I brought up the two babies. When Marion was only six years old, I repented of my disappointment, and thanked God solemnly for my girl, Gerald."

He stopped, and taking her head upon his breast, patted her face, while he went on—

"I have thanked God daily ever since for her. Not a morning, not an evening, that I have not thanked Him for His great gift of this my daughter. What Marion has been to me and my house, who knows but myself? How can I tell, even to you, who have known her so long, how Marion has been the stay and comfort

of my life? Marion, you have wasted the spring of your time on your father and your sister—"

"No, father, not wasted."

"Not wasted, dear," he repeated. "The life of love is never wasted: it is like the rain which fertilizes, and the sun which brings forth; we see the fruits, and we forget the way they grew. Not wasted, Marion; only spent and given for us. You want to take her away from me, Gerald. It is a great thing you ask, but it shall be as my child wishes."

"Gerald knows what I wish," said Marion, simply. "But not to leave you, father—not to leave you."

"Chacomb is not *very* far off," Gerald said.

"It will be as good as a hundred miles away when I have to come to breakfast in the morning and find no Marion. My dear, your father is selfish—he thinks of nothing but his own comfort—forgive him, and go with your lover. I have nothing to give with her, Gerald; but she brings you a heart full of love—ah, Marion, my daughter!—full of love. That is her only heritage, for her brother has wasted all the rest."

"Never mind her brother, sir," said Gerald.

"You have given me something of a right to interfere, and I will go to town and bring him back to you to-morrow, if you let me."

"Ay, bring him back, Gerald. Tell him that he must come home, and spend no more money, while we consider his future. My heart is too full to-night to have any anger in it. By Jove, I wish you could tie him up and give him three dozen, and so wipe out all the score. Now leave me, both of you, to go through these bills, and find out what I shall have to borrow."

Not a thought crossed the simple sailor's mind that his old friend—his companion of near a score of years—could possibly object to lending him any sum he might ask. Not an idea that a Chacomb could object to an alliance with a Revel.

CHAPTER VI.

GERALD looked back at the captain as he drew Marion silently from the room. The papers lay spread beneath his hands, but he was not looking at them. His thoughts had flown back a long way beyond Fred and his debts; they were in the old time before Marion was born. His eyes were full, and his lips were moving. People who, in these superior times, believe in such things, might have thought him praying.

Outside in the garden, swinging her hat by the strings, and singing as she went, was Adie—untroubled, though she knew there was trouble. Hers was the light nature, which she shared with her brother Fred, of being able to disbelieve in trouble. She was impatient

with people who took things seriously; she wanted everybody not to mind; she could not bear to see Marion and her father vexing themselves because Fred could not keep in the straight and narrow way; it was incomprehensible to her why anything should give trouble except sickness and suffering.

"I am glad you have come," she said, "because now, I suppose, it is all made right again. I heard you all talking, and poor Fred's name used a good deal; so I thought I ought not to listen, and went right away down to the cove. See what it is, Gerald, to be in a small house when you are not considered grown up, and must keep out of the way. Well, Marion, you have smoothed things, I hope, for the poor boy. Marion is the greatest peacemaker in all the world, Gerald."

"I am sure she is," said her lover.

"See, dear," said Marion. "It is past eleven, and you will catch cold. Let us go in."

Adie pouted, but obeyed.

"Good night, Gerald. You may kiss me if you like; it's very nice, but I don't think you ought to, you know; you don't kiss Marion. It

is pleasant to have you back again, though I suppose I am too big now for the old games we used to have. But there's the swing still, and we can go fishing; and I can play to you now, instead of Marion; and we can sing trios. Don't go off to any horrid places. Marion used to read your letters a dozen times, and got creeps and shivers over the snakes and alligators. Marion, I keep fancying I hear footsteps in the shrubbery. I was getting quite nervous when you came in. Good night, Gerald."

"Come, Marion," said her lover, when her sister ran in—"come to the gate, at least, with me. See, what a lovely night! Everybody is asleep; walk two steps up the lane with me. It has not been a pleasant ending to the first day of our engagement, dear Marion; but you will be happy in spite of Fred's weakness, will you not? After all, he is only a schoolboy, as you said."

"No, Gerald; but a man ought to be strong; it is his duty."

"I will go to town to-morrow, and see what I can do with him. We shall be back the day after, and—enough of Fred, dear Marion. Now,

when no one is looking but the moon, which has seen so many kisses, put your arms round my neck, and promise me all over again. My love, it is too great happiness. This is what I dreamed of when I was abroad; it was for this that I came home. My dear love, my Marion, could there ever come a time when I should cease to love you?"

Ten minutes later Marion turned to go into the house. Gerald was walking home. Comb Leigh was all asleep. And then she heard, as Adie had heard, steps in the shrubbery.

She stopped and listened.

"Marion!"

It was a voice that she knew, calling her in low tones. She turned sick with dread.

"Marion, come here into the shrubbery."

She hesitated a moment, and obeyed.

"Oh, Fred, Fred, Fred!" she whispered, kissing him, "how could you be so wicked and so foolish?"

It is Fred, hiding behind the shrubs for a chance to speak to Marion. His handsome face is clouded with a little care, but not very much. His blue eyes and fair hair are like Adrienne's,

as is the lofty carriage of his head. His chin is narrow and retreating, and the corners of his mouth are weak. But for beauty of form he is a very Apollo, and his voice is as sweet as a flute.

"I don't know," he replied. "I was wicked because I was so foolish; I was foolish because I was so wicked; and of course I have been a great ass. Don't reproach me, Marion; I came here for a little comfort, and you must not turn upon me."

"How can I help turning upon you? You are breaking my father's heart."

"Nonsense, Marion!—nonsense, sweet maid Marion!" he laughed, flippantly. "People don't break their hearts for a trifle of money to be paid for their sons' debts. They get very angry, pay up, and then forgive them."

"Come in, and see him. Don't hide behind the bushes in your father's own garden, Fred. Be brave. Come in, and beg his pardon."

"I don't know about being brave," he replied. "If I hadn't gone such an awful cropper, I shouldn't mind so much; but addition is a beast of a rule in arithmetic when you come to bring it

home to yourself; and I find that the people have all sent in their bills, and there will be the devil and all, and—"

"And, oh, Fred, why did you not tell us in June?"

"Well, you see, my sister, the fact is, I thought there would be a tremendous row, and —and—when I came down the tutor's letter arrived with me; so I took it from the postman, and thought it would be just as well that the governor should not have it."

"Do you mean to tell me, Fred, that you actually stopped a letter intended for your father?"

"That, Marion, is just exactly what I did do. No one knows it except yourself, and no one ever will. Now, Marion, don't go on and be silly. There's no great harm done, after all."

"Oh, Fred, Fred!" she cried; "and you that we hoped so much of! It isn't only the debt and the folly and the disgrace; but, oh, my brother, it is the terrible disappointment."

He shook off her hand from his shoulder.

"That's the way with the women. They cry and lament about nothing. There, Marion,

don't make mountains out of molehills. A little debt and a stupid rustication. Now kiss me, and say you forgive."

"As if I should not forgive. But it is not my forgiveness that will do any good. Only come in and see him."

"No, Marion, I will not. I came down this evening—travelled with the mail that brought my letter—and hung about here while you were talking with Gerald Chacomb. Adie wrote to me that he was back again; but I could not see him through the trees. I knew his voice, though. If you were a different sort of girl, I should have thought you were spooning. Well, I want you to be my friend. Smooth him over. Tell him he need not worry about the debts. Oxford tradesmen always give long credit, and we will pay them somehow. And I want to go to Egypt with Lord Rodney. He's quite the best fellow in the world."

"And where is the money to come from?"

"It won't cost much. Rodney will pay for all but the travelling expenses. Don't you see the importance of keeping a friend like that?"

"Have you forgotten, Fred, that you have no

money, that you have spent all that your father set aside for you, and that you will have to work your own way in the world?"

"Don't put things in such a bald, coarse manner, Marion. It's bad enough to be poor, without being reminded of it."

"What are we to do, Fred? Oh, what *are* we to do about you?"

"Just nothing, Marion. Let things go on by themselves. It is always the wisest thing not to fidget and fuss. My dear child, you are making a great deal of worry."

"Fred, you do not understand—you *will* not understand! There is no more money left, none at all; but that is nothing. It is you that we are anxious about—your future, your own conduct. Once more, will you come in and see your father?"

"No, I will not," he returned, doggedly. "I shall go back as I came. You had better go and tell him that I have been here."

"It would break his heart to learn that his son came home and waited outside like a—like a—"

"Like a burglar, I suppose."

"Afraid to go into the house and seek his forgiveness."

"Yes, I am afraid. It is all very well for you, Marion. You are his favourite. You have been his companion always. It is with me that he has been always stern and unforgiving. Poor little Adie and I are the children of his second wife. It is not our fault, I suppose."

"Fred, you are unjust."

"Very likely. I do everything that is wrong. I go to Oxford, and I live among gentlemen, and not among cads, as a gentleman. It costs my father a little more than he expected. I am unlucky enough not to get the scholarships and prizes you thought I should get. If you only knew the kind of men who do get these things, you would not think so badly of me."

"Gerald Chacomb got a scholarship, and was a fellow."

"Gerald Chacomb is a prig. Well, it is no use talking, Marion; go and fetch my little Adie out to give me a kiss. *She* won't reproach her brother when he is down on his luck. If she cannot help me as you can, she can tell me I have done nothing disgraceful or dishonourable."

"No, I will not bring Adie to you. She is in bed, poor child. Tell me what I can do for you, Fred—don't be cruel. You know there's nothing in the world I would not do for you. But, oh, if you would only come in with me!"

"Then I tell you what you shall do for me. To-morrow you will get my father to write me a letter sanctioning the Egypt journey; and—and, Marion, have you got any money?"

"I have ten pounds left from my own money."

"Then lend me that, my dear girl. I will give it you back as soon as ever I have any more. I must get back to London. Run and bring it at once, because I must be off."

Marion said nothing, but went away for her purse. It was all she had, and with it vanished her last hope of any new dresses. But she gave it with a cheerful countenance, such as the Lord loveth.

"And now, Fred, what are you going to do?"

"I shall walk on to Barnstaple, and go up to town by the night train. Write to me at the Tavistock, where Rodney and I are staying."

"Fred, do not—do not spend more money."

"The Tavistock is the cheapest place in all

London," he replied, airily. "You could not spend money there if you wanted ever so much. Good night, Marion dear. You are the best of all girls, only a little inclined to sermonize. You will never get a husband if you are so solemn and serious. Come, give me a kiss. There—you are a dear girl—and now one for Adie. And now I will be off. Mind, I depend upon your good offices. You will—"

"I will do what I can for you—when have I not? And, oh, Fred—" remembering suddenly that Gerald was going to town on purpose to see him.

But Fred kissed her lightly on the cheek, and was gone.

Marian sighed, and returned to her father.

"You will be happy, child," said the captain, patting her cheek, "as you deserve to be, my dear—as you deserve to be. I am sorry that this other thing has fallen upon us on such a day; we ought to have been all gladness and joy for my girl's engagement."

"Do not think of it, papa, more than you can help. Gerald will go to town and see Fred; and we must hope for the best. Let us always re-

member our bright-faced boy, with his winning ways, and how we loved him."

She spoke as if her half-brother were about ten years younger than herself.

"Remember what you have always said about his weakness of will, and how he would fall into temptation—it was the fault of his nature: we must make allowances for all. Do not let him go to that wicked place any more; we will keep him here for a little, and try to make him steady. And then, papa, he is only a schoolboy—is he not?"

"I will endeavour, dear, to remember, and to make allowances. But the disappointment is grievous, Marion. After all, money spent is gone, and we are foolish to regret it. Only I can make no more now; and when I die, dear Marion, what is to become of those two helpless children? Who will provide for them? Thank God, dear, that your future is at least placed above starvation point."

"We are in better hands than our own, father. Now, go to bed, dear. Let me put up all your papers. See, here is a letter unopened among them."

"Another bill, Marion—another bill. I will look at it to-morrow."

He put it into his pocket, and shut up the packet of Fred's bills in his desk.

"My daughter"—he took her face in his hands, and held it up to his—two faces as honest, brave, and true as this world has ever seen, and both strangely alike—"my daughter, I am going to lose you. I, that have had the first place, shall have to be content with the second. It is the way of the world, and I do not repine, dear. Remember always, my child, that no husband can love you better than your father."

"I know it, father!" whispered Marion.

"I did not think I should be so moved, my dear, by anything. It seems as if I had so much to say, and no time to say it in. I feel as if opportunities for talking to my daughter would come no more, and yet so much is untold. It seems as if I were going—not my Marion."

"You are nervous, papa, dear. You will be better to-morrow."

"Good night, dear. God bless my darling!

God preserve her from harm, and surround her with happiness and love."

The captain's voice broke down, and his eyes melted into tears.

So the girl's day, that should have been the happiest in her life, was spoiled by her brother's fault; and the night that should have been as a bridal night was mingled with a sense of bitterness that jarred upon her joy. Through her soul flowed the harmonies of love, but now and then the thought of her brother struck discordant notes, and marred the music. Somehow, in the education of our boys, we have dropped out one or two of the elements of morality. They do not learn in our great schools and universities the grand duty of looking things in the face. If they are taught the lesson of working first and enjoying afterwards, it does not seem to stick; and the simple principles of common sense, which should assign to every boy his own way of beginning the battle of life, are left to be taught by experience. Now, as Herodotus says, "Our lessons are mainly taught by our sufferings." Poor Fred wanted to enjoy. And, that he might enjoy, he had brought upon his father's

house the common tragedy of a ruined home. Meantime, with his sister's last ten pounds in his pocket, he was marching gaily across the country, to catch the mail train from Barnstaple.

CHAPTER VII.

EARLY in the morning Marion was roused from sleep by a familiar signal. Not a lover's serenade, for Gerald was in his bed at Chacomb; nor by the voice of the lark leaving his watery nest; nor by the early crow of chanticleer; but by the rattling of gravel thrown up at her window. She knew it for the *réveille* of her father, and, throwing open the casemate, looked out—her face making a pretty picture, with the long hair loose, *crinibus solutis*, floating round and over it; her cheeks as dainty as a peach, and her dimpled mouth. Paint me such a picture, cunning limner. Put in a hand holding a white garment to the throat, lest the sun, who wants to see so much, should catch a glimpse of her marble bosom. Let her eyes be bright, but

full and deep withal; give her oval face the curves that belong to the artistic mind, the mind that feels what others only see; give her eyebrows the slightest possible curve at the corners, to show a latent possibility of will; her forehead must be narrow rather than broad, but a little higher than sculptors have granted to Venus; over her face throw, if you can, some of the expression of the great Love goddess; let there be a newly awakened look of Venus. She is looking out of a square casement with diamond panes; above and on each side is the thick thatch, with green and grey for colouring, edged with deep shade; swallows are flying in and out of the nests, regardless of her presence; creepers are climbing up from below, and twisting lithe tendrils round every little projection, and tossing unoccupied arms about the open window as the wind blows them to and fro. In the garden is her father. On his face no signs of last night's trouble, for the morn is bright. He has slept, and the good has driven off the evil.

"Dress quickly, Marion, and come down," he whispered, loud enough for her to hear. "Do not wake Adie."

Adie was in her own room, next to Marion's, sleeping soundly. The two servants, who completed the household, were asleep too; for it was only five, and nothing astir yet but the captain. Nothing? Everything. The birds were busy with the early worm—the early worm was busy about affairs connected with his own digestive organs. The swallow hunted the fly, the fly looked about for the midge; and nature wore that busy and cheerful aspect—we associate it with universal joy and hymns of praise—when everything is hunting and being hunted. There were sounds from the village, whose life was already awake and hard at work: a pump-handle was working noisily; a ploughboy was whistling; cocks were clearing their throats; somebody was sharpening a tool upon the grindstone; pigs were grunting; an ass—probably a descendant of Lucius, the Golden Ass of Apuleius—full of emotion at the brightness of the dawn, was greeting Aurora with melodious bray; a child was crying—Nature in her loveliest moods seems somehow dissatisfied unless she can throw in a squalling child; a woman was scolding—if all were harmony the sweetest

morning would pall upon the senses—but at such a distance as only to touch the soul with a little jar, a saddened sense of dissonance; and the freshest of breezes was lifting the leaves upon their stalks and waving the branches.

Happiness wakes first; hope, next; trouble, last. The unfortunate young gentleman in the picture, who is just going to be awakened to fight the tiger for the gratification of Nero and the delight of the Roman ladies, is very truthfully represented in that stage of dreaminess which precedes the happy waking. In another moment he will open eyes full of hope; in the next he will turn to the roaring and hungry creature who now pokes eager claws through the bars at him, eager to slay and devour, and the trouble of horrid anticipation will begin. Marion woke to happiness and hope. The only trouble in her heart was the thought of her brother, and this, for the nonce, she put aside. It was one that could wait.

"It is *such* a morning, Marion darling," said the captain. "Dress and come down, and we will go for a sail."

It was indeed a morning of the very finest—

such a morning as makes those who have been pulled out of bed at six to glow with conscious virtue, because it seems like the reward of a good action. Happy those who have only got up early on fine mornings. There are men—living men—who have risen at six on rainy mornings, and so learned to probe some of the deeper depths of remorse.

Then began a day which was destined afterwards to live in her memory—so short, and yet so long—all her life. Not one single detail was ever to be lost. She remembered how she knelt for a moment while her father called to her; how she prayed quickly for him, for Gerald, and for Fred; how she caught her straw hat—the dainty little straw, brown with sunshine and sea breezes, that sat on her head like a crown—and ran lightly downstairs into the garden and her father's arms.

He took her face in his hands, kissing her on the cheeks and on the lips and on the forehead in a comprehensive way unusual with him. Then he held her for a moment without saying anything; and then he passed his hand through her hair, which hung loose in pretty morning fashion.

"My daughter," he whispered, "and so I am going to lose you."

"Not yet, papa; and not altogether, you know."

He shook his head, and let her go.

"Let us make the best of the bright morning, my dearest. I lay awake half the night thinking of you and Gerald and poor Fred, until it occurred to me that thinking would be of no possible use; so I gave it up and went to sleep. Never mind, dear. I will make it up to-night. Tell your father all about it, Marion."

"There is nothing to tell," she replied, reddening a little. "It was only yesterday afternoon that Gerald—"

"Well, dear, I am not going to ask you what Gerald said. You know that lovers' words are sacred."

"Gerald told me he loved me, that is all. He said he loved me even before he went away; and I knew nothing of it."

"But you were always fond of Gerald."

"Oh, yes, papa—always fond of him; but not in that way. And it all seems so different now. I cannot tell you how different. The world is changed with me since yesterday."

"Yes, life is so. A woman leaves her father and her mother, and cleaveth to her husband. It is the rule of Nature."

"But I do not want to leave you, my dear father."

"No, dear. You do not want to, but you will have to leave me. Thank God, you can go happily with the man you love."

"I do love Gerald," she murmured.

"And so yesterday was the very first time that young man spoke to you on this important subject?"

"Yes, the first time; unless, perhaps, it was the day before he left us to go to America, when we had our last walk together. I remember it so well. We were walking home through Chacomb Wood, listening to the birds. I was saying how stupid and lonely it would be without him, and he—but perhaps he did not mean anything."

"What did he say, Marion? That is, if I may ask."

"He said that he hoped I should always find it lonely and stupid without him."

"Some prayers are granted," said her father.

"One of the old philosophers — I suppose it must have been Socrates, because nobody else ever seems to have said anything at all—used to say that men ought to be very careful what they prayed for. The gods, he remarked, sometimes give us what we ask for, and pretty fools we look then. However, Gerald's prayer seems to have been a reasonable one, considering everything."

"You are not jealous, are you, dear? You know I love you better than anybody in this world; better even — yes, perhaps better than my Gerald. But I love him too."

"No, dear, I am not jealous," said the captain, stoutly.

"Tell me you are glad, papa."

"Half-truths, my dear, as your poet Tennyson would tell you, are a very dangerous kind of falsehood. I am not glad on my own account. I am saddened, and a little confused to know what I shall do without you. But I am more glad than I can tell you for your sake, dear. You are going to marry the best young fellow in all the world. I do believe, the most honest, the truest, the most loyal, and the most generous."

Marion's eyes filled with tears.

"You are the best and kindest of dear fathers. Gerald is all that you have said, I am sure, and a thousand things more."

"You will have to find out how to manage your husband, you know, Marion. The old rule used to be, never to let him know how much you love him. That is nonsense. I will give you a better. Make him proud of his work, whatever it is. Keep up the flame in his heart; learn to follow him in his career; cultivate his ambition; never suffer him to think meanly of himself. Remember, my dear, that your husband's career is a more important thing than his love: keep him steadfast to the one, and you will have the other. The true *ars amoris* is the use of intelligent sympathy. You drive your husband with a light rein when you drive him to success."

"But I do not want to drive Gerald, papa."

"Do you not, dear? Chaucer's ladies confessed that what they liked best of all earthly things was power. But perhaps the women of the nineteenth century are wiser."

"I shall always be proud of Gerald."

"Yes, my dear; there are ladies who value their lords according to the market value of their abilities and attainments. Well, be happy, dearest, let who will be wise. You will go and put yourself under the heel of that young man; he will be your tyrant; he will order you and direct you—"

"Papa, papa, papa—*will* you be quiet? So long as he loves me, what matter what he does or says? People who love each other cannot help being kind and thoughtful."

"Come down to the cove, my dear, and let us get the boat ready."

The boat was tossing in the middle of the tiny harbour, fretting at the rope which held her, while the blue waves came rolling in over the bar of sand, and tearing themselves to pieces against the ragged rock on either hand. She was a strong and serviceable little craft, not afraid of a North Devon sea or a stiff breeze—one of poor Kingsley's keen north-easters—and as safe in a squall as a Portsmouth wherry.

The captain hauled in the rope, and Marion shipped the rudder while he went to the boat-house for mast and sails. If Marion had few

accomplishments, she possessed one in perfection —the art of sailing. It was a kind of instinct with her. Had she been so fortunate as to live in the days when there were no boats, she would have been the first to arm her heart with triple brass, and invent a raft of some kind for herself. Fallen on days when there is little in this way left to invent, except torpedoes, she made herself as handy as any boy on the whole coast, from Burnham to Clovelly; good at the rudder, good at lowering the sail, good at keeping the boat's head before the wind, good at tacking, good at running, with gunwale touching the water, before the steady Channel breeze.

"The breeze is fresh, Marion." He took the oars, and rowed out of the cove into the sea beyond. "Now, then, up with the canvas; keep her steady; so! Now she feels it. Dip your nose in it; jump and dance, my pretty; show them a clean pair of heels." He was addressing the boat. "Isn't this better than lying in bed? And now, Marion, we are quite alone, and there is nobody but ourselves to hear—let us talk about your marriage."

"But I am only just engaged, papa."

"Gerald is six and twenty, dear — an age when a young man does not look on waiting with any rapture. This morning I will walk over and talk to Chacomb about it. I expect him to be as pleased as I am myself."

"Papa, I am afraid of Mr. Chacomb."

"Nonsense, Marion."

"It is not nonsense. Sometimes he looks so odd. I have seen him looking sideways at you, papa, when he thought no one saw him; and it was as if he wanted to strangle you. And we have known him all these years, and I never draw any closer to him."

"Chacomb has his reserved side, Marion, but he is a good fellow at heart; and he is very fond of Gerald."

"Ah, yes," said the girl, softening, "he is fond of Gerald. His voice drops when he speaks to him; his eyes follow him about; he forgets to hitch up his shoulder when Gerald is with him; and—and, oh, papa, he is jealous of you."

"Marion, you suspicious child, you are 'making up,'" said her father.

"No, I am not. It is all true. And suppose

he were to become jealous of me after I am married?"

"Then he will be a great donkey, dear. Put these fancies out of your head. Chauncey Chacomb is as fond of you as I am almost, though he does not show it. As for me, I believe there is nothing that he would not do for me. For nearly twenty years we have been companions and friends. No, dear; we are happy in having such a neighbour as Chacomb, without thinking of his son at all. You will own it when I bring *him* back with me to-night to wish you joy. Look at the colours on that rock, dear; grey, purple, green, and black — a bluish black it looks from here. There are the cormorants flying about the point. We will come out some very still day, and try to sketch the light of these early mornings. But I shall have to come out alone soon, shall I not? Marion, when you are married you will take poor little Adie with you to see something of the world, will you not?"

They lapsed into silence for a while, wrapped in their thoughts, and watching the water as the boat flew before the breeze. The captain's face

was composed and grave, but his expression was that of one who looks forward.

So they glided swiftly past the long shore of headland after headland; passing the peaceful villages lying in long streets behind the coves; catching glimpses of homesteads dotted here and there, and hearing the tinkle of the sheep bells from the high downs. Presently the captain shook himself together.

"I am dull for you, Marion; but I was thinking. Let us 'bout ship, and tack for Comb Leigh again. I was thinking about the old days—the days before you were born, my dear. Strange that the time should come back to me to-day so vividly that I thought put away and buried long ago. I never told you, Marion, about your mother's marriage; somehow we have not talked together a great deal about her, even when we have been alone.

"She was very beautiful, Marion—more beautiful than you, my dear. She was the most beautiful woman I have ever seen, and the best and kindest. You are like her so far. She was the daughter of a man in the position of Chauncey Chacomb—a country squire of Dor-

setshire. Until I knew her father, I did not understand what was meant by county families and county pride. My dear, your grandfather was as proud as Lucifer. He had nothing whatever, so far as I could ever learn, no single point of distinction, to be proud of. He and his grandfathers had held their estates for a great many generations. During all these centuries, always opulent, always well educated, always with every chance of success, not one single man had ever distinguished himself. Most of the great Englishmen, somehow, do seem to come from the landed people; but your mother's family had not yet produced even a third-rate great man. However, the fact remained that he was proud. I was only a lieutenant, with very little except my pay. Mary loved me. I spoke to her father, and was received with rather more contumely, I thought, than he would have bestowed upon one of his own footmen coming with the same request. I was a Frenchman; that was his first objection. 'No Frenchman,' he said, 'could possibly be of good family.' Thereupon I produced the dear old genealogy—you know it, dear—with

Charlemagne, Godfrey of Bouillon, and the rest of them. He laughed at the pedigree, which he politely insinuated was a forged one. 'If I had a pedigree,' he said, 'where were the estates?' You see, he could not possibly understand descent without estates. Of course, it was hopeless to explain to him what the Revolution had done for us. Also it was hopeless to tell him that, with his great fortune, it ought to matter simply nothing—and would have mattered nothing in old France—whether I had money or not. So, dear, as it was of no use to expect anything from him, and time was valuable, we took the law into our own hands, Mary and I, and ran away together. We were married the same day at Southampton. When your grandfather received the fatal news, he sent a letter cutting his daughter off with the little portion he could not touch. It is what you have now, dear Marion—your fifty pounds a year. Then he struck her name out of the big Bible, forbade her ever to be mentioned again, and sat down with the consciousness of having behaved in a manner becoming his dignity."

"Poor mamma!"

"She cried a little at first, but we made ourselves happy. I had a little money to spend, and we went to visit the old place in France, which I had never seen at all. Then we agreed to live at Portsmouth until I could get a ship, for which I had to wait about a year. Marion, it was a very happy year, the happiest year I ever had. Only a year, and then you came, my dear; and—and I lost your mother. So I went to sea again; and—well, until you grew up, my love, and could talk to me, I had very little happiness."

Of his second wife the captain never spoke to any one. Fred and Adie had learned by some instinct to ask no questions about their mother. Nor had Marion ever ventured to lift the curtain which her father kept closed.

"And now, Marion, that you are going to marry into one of the oldest county families in Devonshire—as old as the Carews, or the Mays, or the Poles—we might, perhaps, think about a reconciliation. I have lived out of the world with you too long. You will be able, when

you are married, to go into society; and I should like you to go with such family credentials as we can boast."

"But, papa, have we no relations in France?"

"Cousins in plenty, dear; and some day I will hunt them out, and we will go over and call upon them; and I will take my own name and title again for the occasion."

"I am glad," said Marion, "that in all the great family of humanity we have some one to call of our kin."

"To-morrow, dear, I will give you all your mother's letters. You shall read her love letters to me. I think I could not have shown them to you before your heart had learned what love means, and what those letters had been to me —how sacred and how precious. I want your mother to teach you, from her grave, something of what a woman can be to her lover and her husband. I should not like you to be married without learning for yourself all that these letters can teach. Enough talking, dearest. Here is Comb Leigh. Have you enjoyed your sail?"

"Yes, papa; but the talk more."

"Now, then. Hold her up, Marion—so—cleverly steered. There is Adie coming down to meet us. Breakfast—breakfast, both my daughters."

He kissed Adie on the forehead; but as they walked up to the house together, his arm was on the neck of his elder girl.

CHAPTER VIII.

PERHAPS if one were asked to name a time when his courage would be highest and his spirits most buoyant he would fix by choice upon a holiday morning in August, when the sun was shining. All the better, then, if he might be on the North Devon coast, watching the course of the south-west wind sweeping up the broad stretches of the Bristol Channel, and crisping the waves into foaming curls. Great, above all, is the power of the sun. When Aurora and old Tithonus, like a buxom young Cambridge bedmaker and an elderly gyp, have put out the stars and swept up the untidy clouds, the sun goeth forth to work marvels. We know very well how he brings with his breath the golden clusters to the laburnum, and the blushes with

his staring to the young grape's cheek. What we do not sufficiently take note of is his power on the heart of man, bringing to it flowers and fruit as to a tree, and making tender sprays of imagination shoot up even in the most unlikely breasts. I believe that if you nail a scholar to a south wall, he will become a ripe scholar; and I am sure that a young prig, caught early, and trained like a pear tree, may be made to produce in time big word-criticisms in the ——. People who live habitually in the sun never nurse evil dispositions, or brood over fancied wrongs, or spend valuable time in anticipating evil. It is best, therefore, to be born in August, so that the first things your eyes rest upon in this world may be flowers, the clear sky, the sun, and faces which, like Ruth among the stooks, "praise the Lord with sweetest looks." I can hardly think it lucky to be born in March or April, when east winds blow. Children of those months are apt to grow up perverse, ill-conditioned, and of uncertain temper; and it is of course ridiculous for any one to be born between December and February. The folk of sunny lands, prone, it may be, to sudden storms

—even to sticking wrathful knives in neighbourly ribs—are a gay and light-hearted people, dwelling together in amity, careless of the future.

The sunshine entered into Captain Revel's heart. He had no misgivings this morning—no doubt about the future. What had been dark was now bright. The sky was clear above him. He left the cottage to call upon the squire, Marion watching him as he slowly started on his journey. First he loitered for a few minutes among his roses; then he stepped into the road briskly, but stopped to hold a short conversation with a neighbour's dog, one of his oldest and most trusted friends. Then, apparently at the dog's invitation, he looked into the farmyard and inspected the pigs.

"Oh, papa," said Marion to herself, "do go on."

Then he stood for five minutes in the road, studying thoughtfully the mechanism of the water-wheel. Being quite satisfied at length with its working, he proceeded a few steps higher up. Here there was a smithy with the smith hard at work, the fire blazing and roaring, the anvil ringing, and the sparks flying.

"Now he will go in and talk to the smith," thought Marion.

The captain did not go in, but he stood at the doorway talking to the man. The sparks of the hammer ceased, the roaring of the bellows dropped to an occasional groan; and in the quiet of the noonday Marion heard the voices. Then the captain took out his pocket-book, and made a little sketch. Marion knew what he was drawing. Back at the end of the low, dark smithy part of the roof had fallen in, and the sunlight streaming through the opening made shifting lights and shades among the blackened beams and the iron tools hanging upon the nails.

"I wish I was with him," said Marion.

The sketch finished, the captain nodded a friendly farewell to the smith, and proceeded a few yards farther. Presently there crossed his path a file of geese, following each other with heads down, outstretched necks, flapping wings, and as much importance in their manner as if they were a band of strong-minded women with a particular engagement, now due, to go and sit upon a platform and demand that every-

thing should be all argued out again from the beginning, with a special proviso that no more knowledge should be imparted into the controversy than each woman could herself boast.

"Cackle, cackle, cackle!" cried the geese. "Leave us to reconstruct the world: we know everything. Cackle, cackle—we will teach the world everything; we will upset everything. Let the ganders lay the eggs. Cackle, cackle! Sage and onions shall be cultivated no more. We will argue only with those who agree with us. Cackle, cackle! We are the wise and learned sex. Who is this two-legged creature in the path? Let him go and lay eggs."

"Pardon, mesdames," said the captain, taking off his hat and making a very fine bow, quite a reverence of the *ancien régime*, to the little procession.

They crossed the road and plunged into the next field, when they began to fall out with each other.

Then the captain went on.

Presently he came to where the road to Chacomb was met by the path which ran down from the cliffs, the same lane which Marion and

Gerald had climbed the day before. Here he stopped, and hesitating for a moment, took the turn to the left, and began to walk up the lane.

"I thought," said Marion, with a little disappointment, "that he was going to Chacomb Hall."

The fact was that the captain, wrapped in his thoughts, quite forgot the purpose with which he started, and was now taking his customary walk up the hill.

When he was out of sight, Marion went into the house for something to read. New and recent literature rarely found its way to Comb Leigh, and the most attractive volume she could find was one of Pope's poems. She chose this, and retreated to the shadiest place in the garden, where she could escape the rattle of her younger sister's talk, and sat down with the volume open before her. But her thoughts very soon wandered far away from the poet. Ah, philosophers and verse-makers, how many a time your books are opened, and the characters, which never reach the brain, read by the eye alone! The ghost of the little Twickenham

poet was looking down upon her from the spirit world. 'She is reading ME,' he observed, with pardonable pride, to his friend Bolingbroke. "She is reading MY poems. Observe, my St. John, she leaves all meaner things to vain ambition and the pride of kings. She could do nothing better. Prudent nymph! Happy bard!"

First her thoughts wandered away to Gerald, and to the sweet confidences of yesterday. There was the *novitas rei*, the newness of the thing, which yet seemed, under all the circumstances, as if nothing else could ever have been expected. It was not strange at all. She belonged to Gerald, she said to herself; but then, somehow, she always had belonged to Gerald, and so that was nothing new. And then she fell to wondering what Gerald's father would say, and her thoughts yielding to the soft influence of the summer season, she began, in dreamy fashion, with lids dropped, to listen to the sounds in the air around her. The geese, after disputing with each other as to which knew most, through personal wrongs in particular, about the rights of geese in general, fell to pecking and

snapping, quite like platform ladies, and with such a cackle as may be heard on a Saturday evening in Ratcliff-highway, what time the *placens uxor* expects her husband to return with wavering step and multiplying eye, bringing home the scanty residue of the weekly wage. After this battle, the geese, arriving at the conclusion that there was nothing to be got by arguing with nasty, obstinate things who would not listen, retired to separate corners and sulked, making savage dabs at tasteless tufts of grass, and pitching, with more than usual vehemence, into the unwary worm. All this time the blacksmith's hammer was ringing on the anvil, the bellows was wheezing, the flames were roaring. Presently the old village carpenter, who was also a boatman, came along the road, swearing softly and melodiously, because there was nobody to talk to, at things in general, and bearing with him something hot and smoking, which he began to daub over the bottom of his boat. The smoke curled up, black and sooty grey, darkening, where it spread, the clear blue of the sky. Then the carpenter, too, taking his hammer, chimed in with the blacksmith, the geese,

the anvil, and the fire, with a steady tap-tap, as he tinkered and cobbled the bottom of his old craft. Every sound was separate and well-defined, but yet seemed to blend together and make music. Marion's thoughts passed away wholly from herself, and became a part of what she heard; so that in the future, where this morning was to live for ever, it seemed as if no precious moment had been lost, nor one single thing dropped from her memory of what made it sweet and beautiful. Besides the blacksmith, and the boatman, and the geese, she became aware of the great water-wheel going round with a steady burr-r-r in deep undertone, like the pedal notes of an organ; there was a grasshopper at the foot of an apple tree, pretending to be an Italian and a *cigale;* there were those big foolish fellows, the credulous humble-bees, going about with their trumpets, firmly convinced, and trying to convince other people, that the devil was dead, and that "warm days should never cease;" there were the pigs, fond and faithful lovers of the present, grunting violoncello notes of satisfaction and content; there was the turkey, whom the poetical Scott calls the bubbly-

jock, gobbling in the distance, with a melodious gurgle as of an oboe played softly; with him were the ducks, a material-minded race, whose hearts are too much set upon things of this world—they quacked like the gentle flageolet in its lower notes; there was a peacock who screamed, and it was as if cymbals clashed; everything chimed in, as if there was no shirking possible on such a day, but all must help to swell the great concerted piece. The waves lapped gently upon the shore, the leaves rustled in the light breeze, and from the orchard came the twittering of the birds. Marion knew how to distinguish them every one: that was the cooing of the wood-pigeon; that the shrill pipe of the wren.

"August is late for him," said Marion.

The chaffinch, somewhere invisible, added his monotonous song; the little bluetit flew from branch to branch with a short, quick note, in impatience at the concert; the blackcap sang as if he was uncertain whether to imitate the nightingale or the blackbird; on the top of a rugged and twisted old apple tree sat the chiff-chaff, calling his own name as loudly as if he were playing a

part in a burlesque; the yellowhammer, who also had words as well as tune, sang his refrain of "a little bit of bread and no cheese," with a tremendous emphasis on the *no;* and the great-tit added its two notes, like a saw grinding not out of harmony with the rest.

"There are more," said Marion to herself; "but I cannot make them all out."

As she listened, peace flowed in upon her soul with a rush like the bore of a tidal river; the music set itself to words; and voices sang round her—

"Gerald — Gerald — Gerald — my lover Gerald!"

Presently her head leant backwards, her eyes closed, and the volume dropped from her hands upon the grass.

"Observe, my St. John," said the rejoicing *umbra* of Pope, "she is closing her eyes to reflect upon the words of wisdom she has read in ME."

Nobody now took any more notice of the magnificent village orchestra; but all the instruments, including the birds, the geese, the pigs, and the waves, went on, which is an unfeeling way with

Nature, just the same. The face of the listener lay turned a little to the left; the lips were parted with a smile; the wind lifted and dropped the brown hair upon the forehead; in the dimples, at the corners of her mouth, lurked a thousand little sleeping loves; the eyes, Marion's sweet and steadfast eyes, were closed. The girl is happy. Let her rest.

CHAPTER IX.

THE lane up which the captain was walking was a lane of set and serious purpose. It ran straight up the hill, bending neither to the right nor to the left, perhaps in imitation of bigger roads built by the Romans. It was paved with loose flat stones, like stepping-stones or stairs, and now and then made you desire, when they slipped from your foot and brought you down, to pile them in a heap, and use them to raise your Bethel instead of your woes, as recommended by the hymn. Nevertheless, a pretty lane, set on either side with a hedge whereon climbed and clung the wild rose, its blossoms gone for the summer, but bright with hips; the honeysuckle, which is mercifully ordered to bloom from June till October; and the sweet wild con-

volvulus, which flowers whenever it gets any encouragement in the way of sunshine. Half-way up the lane there was a pound, erected once by a defunct churchwarden of Puritanical views as regards straying animals. As he was alone in his opinions, and died without disciples, no living thing had ever been impounded in it. Sitting on the topmost bar of the pound, his feet on the second rail, among the long grass and weeds which grew up in the interior of this sunlit dungeon, and poked spikey heads through the rails, was the very man whom Captain Revel wished to see—Chauncey Chacomb. The squire was, unfortunately, more moody, more savage this morning than the previous night. He was especially angry with himself, because he had let his great secret, the secret of his overpowering jealousy and hatred, pass from himself to the doctor. So felt Samson when he awoke in the morning, and remembered what he had told to Dalilah. He had noticed his cousin's strange and searching glance. He knew what it meant. It wanted no words for him to understand that Joe Chacomb thought him—Chauncey—to be going mad; and he knew, be-

sides, that it was true. He had pressed upon his cousin that morning a cheque for double the sum he had asked for the day before, and both felt that it was to pay for silence. They had walked together gloomily after breakfast up the lane, and Joseph, tired of his moody companion, went on and left him on the rail, alone with his reflections. He did not look well. His face was pallid; his eyes were bloodshot, for he had been awake all night; his lips were twitching; there was a long, straight crease across his forehead; his right shoulder—the uneven one—was hitched up to his ear; his fingers were beating a tattoo upon the rail. What cruel fate was this that brought the two men together in such a place, and at such a time?

It is in the seventeenth century style—quite *rococo* now, and antiquated—to attribute disastrous events to the agency of the Devil in person. The more modern, perhaps the better, plan is to avoid going quite to the bottom of things, and say that accident, circumstance, or chance led to such and such a conjunction of events. What are we to say? Is it design, or is it chance? One is taken, and the other left.

One catches the train which is going to be smashed, but goes off jeering at the other who is too late, and is left behind upon the platform. One starts for Australia by the steamer which founders in the Bay of Biscay, while the other waits for that which is going to resist the storm. One gets a bullet in the head, while the other comes out of the battle with only his coat sleeve riddled. On this August morning, a man took a turn to the left instead of keeping straight on, as he had intended. Safety was in the one path, and in the other—death.

The rugged upland path led the captain's straying feet slowly up the flat stones which formed the rough steps of the lane. Before him, leading him insensibly, in fact, by the hand, stalked the fine actor who plays the principal part in the *Danse Macabre.* It is a defect in that otherwise admirable series of drawings, that every single sketch is a group of two, wherein the intention of the leading figure, despite his politeness—you will observe the gallant bearing of the Chevalier La Mort towards the ladies — is but too apparent. A later artist would have represented the Disguise of Mors.

He would have shown him as lurking beneath a stone in the shape of a viper, or flying through the air as an eagle, or crouching in shrubs like a panther, or even sitting on an old village pound by the side of mad Chauncey Chacomb, whispering devilry. But, in any case, the patient—or beneficiary—Dominus Moribundus, would have advanced to his fate with a step as cheery, a smile as jocund, a bearing as gallant, a countenance as unsuspicious, a heart as light, as Captain Revel.

He greeted Chacomb with a laugh, which reminded him of yesterday's humiliation—a laugh which set every nerve of the jealous and suspicious man tingling; a laugh utterly regardless of those morbid feelings which natures such as Chauncey Chacomb's generally mistake for evidences of superior delicacy and refinement.

"You, Chacomb?" he cried; "and up here? The very man I wanted to see. Come off your perch, man, and walk up to the top with me. Where's the doctor? Did Gerald go off this morning? How is the picture looking to-day? Ha! ha! We shall find it a breather for the next

five minutes. Not so young as we were, we old fellows. How are the flesh tints, and the delicate outlines of the panel, eh? Ho! ho!"

Chauncey Chacomb screwed his mouth into what he meant for a smile, and slowly descended from his rail. If he was getting older—granted that he was sixty-one—so much the more reason for hiding the fact away. If he had made a mistake about the picture—and he was not so certain of that—it was an additional proof of bad taste in the captain to harp upon it.

"Not so young as we were, Revel!" he repeated. "None of us are, I suppose."

"I like the niggers for one thing," said Revel, leading the way; "they never know their own age within forty or fifty years. I once knew an old fellow on the West Coast who died at a hundred and twenty, as near as could be guessed, and refused to be comforted when he was being snuffed out, because he was cut off in his youth."

"I am not a hundred and twenty," returned the other, gloomily.

Revel did not notice his bad temper. He

was one of those men whose own tempers are so equable, that they are slow to suspect ill-temper in others. Nothing short of the wildest outbreak on the part of Chauncey Chacomb would have made the captain realise that his old friend could be actuated by any but the most kindly and cheerful sentiments.

"Look round, Chacomb, at the view up the valley. I do not know which is the best time in the day to mount this hill. I think such a morning as this, when there is no mist to hide the glorious breadth of colour. There was a light sea fog at six, but it has gone. There is a picture for you. It ought to be all the more enjoyable for being your own, eh? A more valuable picture than any in the Collection. Possession adds an additional charm of its own, I should think. I remember going to France about three and twenty years ago. I took my first wife there, in fact, for our honeymoon, poor thing, to show her the old place that was ours for a thousand years, until the Revolution swept us all away. It was on a summer morning like this. The ruins of the château are on the left bank of the Loire as you go down—the *digue*,

you know, is on the other side. There is a town on the right bank, just a scrap of a town; a bridge over the river, which runs like a brook over its shallow and pebbly bed; and on the other side there is a little hill where they built the castle—one tower at each end, halls and chapels and dungeons between—almost a royal castle for the memory of abominable things; for my people were great sticklers for seigneurial rights. Very odd, Chacomb, that a man's heart glows with pride to remember that his ancestors were great rogues. The place is all in ruins now, but I went over it and spent the pleasantest day in all my life, pointing out to my wife the place where the thumbscrewing went on, where the rack stood, where the peasants were shut up on bread and water, and all the rest of it. It was just such a day as this, and we stood on the top of the tower, and looked over miles of as fertile country as there is in France. All ours once. I understood the pride of ownership for the first time, though I had no part or share in a single rood of land. I envy you, Chacomb."

The squire's head relented a little. It is undoubtedly a pleasant thing to be envied. The

desire of exciting envy is, perhaps, next to the spur of necessity, one of the principal motives to work and stimulants to success. Those who deprecate the love of envy are themselves those most liable to the passion—the poor and disappointed folk, not the rich and envied. I have known ladies who, I am quite certain, enjoyed their own fine things in proportion to the green and bilious feelings of envy they saw aroused in their friends and guests. If you want to see the highest enjoyment, chiefly caused by the awakening of profound envy in others, give a small schoolboy a watch and chain; a youthful schoolgirl a sealskin jacket; or a charity child a fourpenny-piece.

"Yes, Chacomb," the captain went on, "I envy you. I wish I had broad acres and forest land of my own, as my grandfather had. It would help me now, at all events."

The squire, who was panting behind him, instinctively took his hands out of his pockets and buttoned up his coat. At all events, he would lend no money.

"Why now?" he asked.

"First, because I should have less anxiety

about that boy of mine; and secondly, because I should not have to let my Marion go to your Gerald empty-handed."

The squire lifted his head, wagged it, nodded it, and grinned silently. Then he accelerated his pace, and lessened the distance between the captain and himself.

"Say that again, Revel. I did not quite catch."

"I say, Chacomb, that I am sorry to let Marion go almost empty-handed to her husband."

"Ah!" said the squire.

"When did Gerald tell you?"

"He did not tell me."

The captain went on, still striding in advance. It was like one of those processions that may be seen in a mediæval manuscript. First marches the knight, chivalrous and frank; behind him goes the villein, with the thoughts of a villein stamped upon his face; with the latter, arm in arm, no less a personage than the Devil. The first walked with a light and springy step, the sunshine pouring over the hedge upon his face; he walked as one whose heart is full of hope;

the second, crouching and bent, seemed to pull his feet painfully, step by step, up the ascent. He was in shadow, too, being much shorter than the other, save when a gap in the bushes allowed the sunshine to throw a gleam of light upon his face, which brought out the more forcibly the seaminess with which his passions were furrowing it. As for the third Person, he was invisible. Had it been otherwise, I would joyfully have described him to you in this place, and then my history would have been indeed original, unique, and priceless.

"Gerald did not tell you! Ah, he went off too early this morning. But you suspected, old friend, eh? You thought, perhaps, what might happen when the boy came home again?"

"I suspected? Yes, I did suspect," said the squire.

"I did not, Chacomb. You knew your boy better than I did. But it seems natural now: a thing so right and fitting for both that, though it was only arranged last night, it has settled down in my thoughts as completely as if it had been arranged from the beginning. To be sure, the pair have been always together, except when

Gerald was away. You know the long letters he used to send her. There was not a word of love in a deskful of them; but it would be easy to read them now by the light of what we know, and find out proofs—eh?—of something deeper than friendship. I wish you joy, Chacomb, of your new daughter. Marion will make a fair châtelaine of Chacomb Hall."

The squire answered nothing, but twitched up his right shoulder with a half-glance sideways, as if to make sure that it was there. That portion of his frame might have been the chosen seat of an evil genius, from the attention he bestowed upon it in disturbed and anxious moments. A look of doubt, as if his way was not quite clear before him, crossed his face. Then he lifted his head and listened again, for the captain's heart was full, and he must needs go on.

"Gerald and Marion—Marion and Gerald—they have been in my thoughts together so long that it will be no effort to keep them together always. Gerald and Marion. It is a great happiness to me — a greater happiness, Chacomb, than I could have hoped or expected.

Gerald has been to me always as dear as my own son. There is no boy to whom I would more gladly entrust my girl's happiness."

His son's praises only made the self-tormentor more angry. But he chafed in silence.

"I do think, Chacomb," the captain went on, "that Heaven is kinder to us than we can even ask. When things look darkest, comes a touch of fortune that lights up the whole atmosphere again. They looked very dull last night when I heard how Fred had disgraced himself. Did Gerald tell you that?"

"No—no! Disgraced himself? Tell me about that," answered the squire, quickly.

"He has been rusticated for a year."

"Ah!" The squire smacked his lips and drew a long breath—perhaps of fatigue. "Was it—was it for anything more than usually shameful and dishonourable?"

"As you please to look at it. Gerald tries to make light of it. It was only a schoolboy freak."

"A schoolboy freak, you call it. Fred is only twenty, is he?"

"Very nearly. He is three years younger

than Marion. The news came last night. I was gloomily looking over the letters and bills—"

"Fred has got into debt, then? Ah!"

"When the two came in, and told me all about it. Well, I have had a long spell of fair weather: I must expect an occasional squall. But I have thought it all out, Chacomb. I will tell you what I propose. I take it for granted, my dear old friend, that you are as pleased at the match as I am. Gerald will stay at home with you; he will be your right-hand man. Marion will show you what it means to have a daughter. You shall lend me money to pay off the prodigal's debts. We will have the wedding in September; and then I shall take the boy to London, put him to some work, and take care of him myself. Poor Fred is only a boy, after all."

As the captain enumerated each clause of his proposed plan of perfect happiness, the squire's right ear and shoulder came together with little jerks, each of great meaning.

"Oh, Fred is only a boy. And the marriage will take place in September. And you will

go to London to take care of him. I see. Very good."

"That is what I think of doing. It runs in the blood, you see. My father, who was forty-five when he married, began with what you may call a good solid foundation of debt. The hereditary tendency passed over me, and has attacked poor Fred. Unfortunate that I did not foresee the danger. Then I should not have had to borrow of you."

"Quite so," said the squire, with a grin. "That's very unfortunate; extremely unfortunate—that is."

"Fred's debts come to about a thousand pounds, all told. Not so bad for the son of a half-pay officer, is it? But what should we have said if he had emulated the example of his great-great-uncle, the chevalier, who distinguished himself, a century and a half ago, by a career rather shorter and a great deal merrier? It only lasted six months. He was a private friend of the Regent, and a very particular friend of the Countess de Parabère. Some other young fellow ran him through the body, after one poor little summer 'on the chuck,' as we

used to say in the navy, and they found his debts were half a million of francs. No one paid them, poor fellow; and history, while it drops a tear over the chevalier, has none for his creditors. There must have been something winning about the young fellow to make all the world trust him. Perhaps Fred is like him. At all events, Chacomb, this is the position of affairs. There is a balance of four hundred or so in the bank, all that is left of the money saved for the boy's education. Marion and I put it by, you know. There will be six hundred to pay. Now, I intend to ask you for that sum, Chacomb."

"Ah!" said the squire, who was growing purple in the face, perhaps with the exertion of going uphill.

"Yes, you shall lend me that sum, and I shall be able to pay you back when Fred gets an income."

"When Fred gets—ah!—gets an income," gasped the squire.

"It will be a few years—two or three years—first, I am afraid. But I shall devote myself to the boy. Never fear for Fred, Chacomb. Per-

haps I have been too fond of my Marion, and neglected the boy. That shall be seen to—and at once."

The squire, answering nothing, began to swing his arms backwards and forwards. Over his face came the same expression which had alarmed the doctor the previous night, a look of uncontrollable passion, which surged up into his cheeks in bursts of crimson, and receded, leaving them pallid; which made his lips full and his mouth tremble; which gave unwonted fire to his eyes. But now the doctor was not present, and Chauncey Chacomb, with that invisible companion we have spoken of, had it all his own way.

As the captain spoke the last words, the lane came to an end at a field gate which led to the open down. The level of the summit was reached.

"Ah," cried Revel, "here we are at last."

Without looking round he vaulted the gate, and turned off upon the level, springy turf towards the edge of the cliff, followed by the other two, a little distance behind him—Chauncey Chacomb and the Devil.

"The grass is pleasant after the stony path," said the captain. "This is the place that my girl is so fond of. I believe she used to sit up here by herself, and watch the ships coming up the Channel—'silver sails all out of the west'—thinking that one of them might bring Gerald. I will take you where she used to come: the very best place for a good sea view, especially when it is fine enough to see Lundy, between this and Clovelly. You may watch the sea, if you like, while I read you my young scapegrace's letter."

Captain Revel was like the unfortunate draper in "Pierre Pathelin," divided between his wool and his sheep, inasmuch as his thoughts went from one thing to the other. They were divided between Marion and Fred.

"And when we have read the letter, we will talk over Gerald and Marion's affairs."

There was near them a fourth person lying on the grass, whom Chauncey Chacomb had forgotten, his cousin Joseph. He was reclining supine in considerable comfort; his head was propped on a pillow made up of a little mound of tufted grass, surrounded by one of the

squire's soft felt hats—a new and a very good hat—which he had crumpled up; he had put on a new Tweed coat belonging also to the head of the Chacomb clan—it mattered very little about the sleeves being too short; he was smoking one of half a dozen cigars he had thoughtfully taken from Gerald's own box, brought by him from Havana; he occasionally tapped with thankfulness that portion of his chest on which lay the pocket-book with Chauncey Chacomb's cheque for £200; his legs were crossed and his arms thrown out upon the grass, so that the warm sun and the cool breeze could work unchecked all their beneficent will upon him.

His eyes were half-closed as he watched the blue wreaths from his cigar rise daintily into the air, and the wind blow them away, streaming like a girl's tresses by the sea-shore. Near him sat a fat and motherly-looking ewe, pretending to be pleased rather than frightened at the proximity of the stranger. Every now and then he made faces at her, blew the smoke in her direction, and even shook a menacing boot at her. In vain: the experienced matron smiled like a Celestial, but moved not. Ugly

faces do not hurt, they amuse; boots may shake, but do not fly off like flints and pebbles; tobacco smoke is even pleasant in the open air. To be sure, all sheep naturally have an aversion to the smell within closed doors, because butchers' assistants have a habit of smoking common tobacco in certain places, never named among the race, where the associations are unpleasant. So the sheep sat and looked on; while the doctor, in murmuring tones, like one who eats the lotos in a land where it is always afternoon, addressed her with honeyed words and dulcet tones.

"Mother of mutton," he said, with a smack of his lips, "fear not the stranger who comes with neither club nor dog. Your children, madam, have gone, perhaps, to the bourne which makes that stranger the man he is. The lambs whom you imagine to be in exile in foreign lands have worked up into these arms and legs, and this scientific brain. 'Alas, unmindful of mint sauce, among the mint they played.' There is thus, madam, if one may say so, a kind of relationship between us. We may even one day knit closer the tie that binds us. The grass which

you are champing—it is succulent, and eats short, I am sure, from the expression of your open countenance—may perhaps, in other forms, become part of the frame of the humble philosopher who addresses you. This, madam, is a law of the universe: life preys on life, the strong devour the weak; and though I sincerely hope that I shall not eat your ladyship, and that your sphere of maternal usefulness may be protracted for many a happy summer, you will acknowledge that I must devour somebody, and may have to devour you. Animals with brains are more dangerous to lambs than animals with muscles. Your respected husband, madam, Sir Timothy Ram — I believe it is a good old county name — is a strong creature, but a mighty fool; the fox is a crafty animal, and, though he lacks strength, has hitherto managed to preserve his independence. I, La Mère, if you will allow me the expression, am both strong and crafty; therefore I am to be feared by lambs. I will give you a wrinkle, madam: never you work for yourself, if you can get any one to work for you. Joseph Chacomb, O sheep of solemn vacancy, is forty-

five years of age; he has hitherto made other people work for him; he proposes to continue that line of action; and he hopes devoutly never to do any more work at all. For his cousin Chauncey has blossomed into an Ass so enormous, that it would be an unspeakably sinful thing to let another have the squeezing and the plucking of him. Families should keep their hawks as well as their pigeons among themselves; and it is only Christian to do unto your cousin that which other men would do unto him if they could. Gerald, madam, is an ass of another kind. My own sincere prayer is that Gerald may marry Marion, and—"

Here his soliloquy was cut short by the sound of voices, or of one voice, and raising his head a little he saw Revel, with the squire following at his heels, walking as I have described across the down in the direction of the cliff. Naturally he did not see the third person, who was invisible.

"What the devil is the matter with Chauncey?" murmured the doctor. "He looks exactly as he did last night."

Just then the squire raised his face, so that the sunlight fell full upon it.

"By gad," said the doctor, rousing himself, "I believe there will be a row. Look at the captain pointing placidly with his stick to the sea, while Chauncey mops and mows behind him, like an ape who would like to swear horribly, but forgets the words. This grows interesting."

Chauncey Chacomb followed mechanically, his body bent and half crouching, though the ground was level; but his hands were spread out half-way between the hips and the shoulders, with quick restless movements; his eyes watched Revel's back with a strange intensity of gaze, which was like a wild beast's glare; his lips worked uneasily; his cheek twitched.

"I wonder if he *is* mad?" said the doctor, watching. "I've a good mind to go and spoil the row. I believe he must be mad."

He sat up to see better. The ewe, thinking the time for dissimulation was past, started to her feet and scuttled off in undisguised terror. But Dr. Chacomb was not thinking of her.

"I am sure," he said to himself, "that if Chauncey had a dagger he would stick it into Revel's back. He looks more dangerous than he did last night. There *must* be a row. Why does not Revel turn round? It would be fun to see him, just now, catch that charming expression on my cousin's face, when it looks most devilish. If they come to a fight I shall have to intervene, like the Queen's Proctor, or a policeman at a pantomime."

He had not long to wait.

The two moved on across the ground, which rose a little until it reached a sort of saddleback, from which the turf sloped rapidly for eight feet or so, until it came to the edge of the cliff, which here descended almost perpendicularly to the sea. The figures stood out for a moment to the doctor's eye like two black silhouettes before the bright and sunny sky: the one erect and tall, the other crouched and misshapen.

Then the captain stopped.

"Here we are, Chacomb. The best place in all Devonshire on a fine summer's day; a place for lovers to sit and dream. I believe it was

here that Gerald and Marion yesterday came to an understanding, as the country folk say. Ha! ha! Now we will sit down and talk it over." He turned round slowly, as a man does who is looking for a soft place to sit down upon. "Good God, Chacomb, what is the matter?"

The man's face was wild with boiling rage: his cheek was white; his eyes were red; his hands were raised to the level of his face, and held palms outward; his teeth chattered, but he could find no words. Chauncey Chacomb was mad, much more mad than when, the night before, he had poured out the secret of his foolish soul.

"Chacomb!" repeated the captain.

"I—I—I hate you!" stammered the other, feeling about the air with his hands, as if searching for words. "I hate you! I would kill you if I could!"

He moved forward with a threatening gesture. Captain Revel, bewildered, stepped back. And then—then, all in a moment, the bloodshot eyes of the madman looked into space, for Captain Revel had disappeared. His foot slipped

upon the smooth grass as he recoiled before the threatening gestures of his companion; he reeled and staggered; he fell head foremost on the slope; he caught with both hands at the short turf, but the roots came away from the rocky soil in his grasp; and, without a cry or a sound, he rolled over the edge of the cliff, and was gone.

When the fit left Chauncey Chacomb, he remembered, as in a dream, the captain's last look of horror, and it remained with him an accusing spirit till the day of his death.

It took him a few moments to realize what had happened. When he did, his madness being still strong upon him, he threw himself forward on the slope, at imminent risk of falling over, and lay on hands and knees, with his head projected over the edge. The cliff was about a hundred feet high, not quite perpendicular. Just above the water was a narrow ledge. On this ledge lay a helpless mass of clothes and broken bones, which had a minute before been Captain Revel. It still moved, so that he was not dead.

The wretched man cried and shouted, exulting like an Israelite over the fall of his enemy.

"Revel"—the rocks rang out the name, and the echoes took it up, and repeated it along the black line of curved and indented cliff—"Revel—Revel—Revel—listen, before you die. Gerald shall never marry Marion—do you hear? I will lend no money to your spendthrift son—do you hear? Fred and the girls shall starve—do you hear? I lend them money? I will see them begging their bread in the streets first. Do you hear? do you hear? do you hear? There you are, and there you will die. Ho! ho! ho! There you will die!"

Did the broken and shattered form of the man below catch the mockings of his enemy, as they rolled from point to point round the coves and bays of the vexed shore? But the harsh tones did not break upon the sleep of the innocent girl by Comb Leigh Cove, to mar the beauty of her love dream.

The squire felt with thankfulness that he had recovered his powers of speech, and was going on with greatly increased freedom and liberty of utterance, but found he could not, being suddenly and violently pulled backwards by the heels. It was his cousin dragging him up, at the

risk of his own life and limbs—a more perilous feat than the rescue of a drowning man; for Chauncey Chacomb kicked and writhed, shouting curses and imprecations on Revel, on his cousin, and on Marion. Doctor Joseph, however, went about his work with great coolness, and, after five minutes' struggle, had his cousin safely on the level sward, with one hand firmly in his collar, coat and shirt and all.

"Let me go!" cried the maniac; "let me go! Let me see him die! Joseph, it isn't half enough to kill him. I want to taunt him. Let me go! Suppose he were to die before I have told him all. Oh, what a chance to miss!"

"Be quiet, madman, or I will squeeze the breath out of your miserable little body. Be quiet, I say."

The doctor shook him backwards and forwards till his struggles ceased, and then turned him round, and looked straight into his eyes.

"Let me go, Joe," he whimpered; "let me go —please let me go; and I will give you five hundred pounds. I want just to have one more look—one more look. Ah, one more!"

Here his voice died away in broken murmurs;

and he fell to shaking like one who has an ague. For he could not choose but look back into the doctor's eyes, which seemed searching into his very soul. He struggled to speak, but his tongue refused to move; he tried to turn away his gaze, but he could not: the mesmeric influence of the stronger will was upon the weaker. His mania passed away from him, his arms dropped, his lips closed. The doctor, still holding him by one hand, made a pass or two with the other, and then laid him gently on the inner slope of the sward, his face turned inland.

"So," he said; "here is a devil of a business! What is to be done next?"

What, indeed! He left his patient safe for a while in his mesmeric sleep, and crept warily down the slope. Where it shelved most steeply, close to the edge, he laid himself along the ground, and digging knees, toes, and elbows in the turf, he looked over. It was a fearful place; the cliff was inclined at a slight angle to the vertical, was stuck with small ledges and projections, on which the man had broken his fall, and so prolonged his pains. He lay on the lowest ledge, but now seemed motionless and dead. The doctor

noticed that the projection ran along the base of the cliff, and apparently round the corner, and into a cleft in the wall, where Nature seemed to have designed a cove, but changed her mind owing to the difficulties of the undertaking.

"I might get down there," said the doctor; "at any rate, I can try."

He scrambled back, and looked again at his cousin.

"Sleep on, you miserable little madman," he said. "A pretty morning's work you've done. Sleep, you—you—you microcephalous imbecile, till I come back and kick you up."

Chauncey Chacomb made no answer. His eyes were closed, and he was sleeping.

"Had I known anything of the medical profession," the doctor murmured, "I should have locked you up last night. A strait-waistcoat and a little gruel, and myself for your private physician and adviser. What a chance—what a chance to miss! Everything," he added with a sigh, and hurrying along the cliff to the gap—"everything is in the hands of the man who has taught himself his profession. Joseph Chacomb,

you were a fool, a very great fool, not to read in the days of your youth. I wonder if I can get down there?"

It was his only chance, for all along the road beyond the waves washed the bare faces of the vertical cliff. But here, where the ledge seemed to be carried round the curve of the rock, there was a deep indentation, as if a large knife had begun to cut a triangular stile, but failing partly in the task, had left a ragged mass at the bottom piled up by broken rocks and overgrown with brambles.

It was possible to get down as far as this by an active man; but beyond? Beyond it the waters ran into the gap, and at its mouth the cliffs stood face to face to make a gate. But the doctor thought it looked just possible to get round by the boulders and rocks that lay about the entrance.

"I don't like it," he said; "but I will try. I think Chauncey will do for half an hour."

He talked to himself, as was his wont, in cheerful tones; but his face was pale and his hand shook as he thought of the murdered man.

"Murdered," he said, half aloud; "murdered, if ever man was murdered!"

There was a kind of landslip at the end of the gap, down which he lowered himself step by step, holding by bramble and briar, clinging to projecting rocks, which gave way beneath his weight, creeping warily along the edge of precipices—not Alpine, certainly, but high enough to kill him if he fell—and dropping down smooth faces from ledge to ledge. But at last he stood above the water, where a single stone gave him a slippery foothold. He looked round him, and groaned.

"Chauncey, if I get safe out of this, I will make you pay for it."

It was a black and savage-looking place, in which the waves, though it was a comparatively smooth day outside, flung up jets and fountains of spray and foam, with loud whistlings and roarings, which sometimes frightened belated market women coming along the down after dark, when the weather was stormy and the wind high.

He looked round him, and saw at the back the cave, dark and yawning. He shuddered.

"I suppose the king of the octopuses holds his throne there. I hope his majesty is asleep. It would be a sweet thing to see his long claws coming out of the cave, and feel them catching me round the neck, and I without so much as a penknife—even a toothpick might be useful."

He clambered, clung, and crept along the black and sloping sides of the infernal hole, towards the opening. There he found his further progress stopped by a rough, serrated rock, standing like a sentinel to bar his way. He whistled in despair. The big, dark rock barred his progress, and he felt as if he could neither get forward nor back. Then he sat down, his feet dangling over the water, and began to reflect, looking at the boulder.

"I can't get over you," he murmured, "you big, black devil; but I might get round you. Suppose I was to fall in and be drowned, like a rat in a trap, as I believe I shall! It would serve me right, for getting down here at all. I should be found in a few years, perhaps, all that would be left of me—a button or two, a purse with some money, a silver watch: that would be the final edition of the works of this Josephus.

Suppose, which is equally probable, that I have to wait here and starve slowly till the octopus in the cave thinks he is strong enough to throw off the mask and attack me. Chauncey, if ever I do get back, it shall be bad for you. No!" as he made another effort to get over the rock which barred him from further advance. He looked down into the dark depths beneath him. "That won't do. Pah! The crabs are mustering in all their force, and sending invitations to their relations. I can see them at the bottom, I believe. The lobsters will hear of it, and come without being invited. There are yellow star-fish lying on the stones across the water—they have eyes, and are longing to be at me. There must be whelks, too, at the bottom. When they have eaten me, they will be caught and eaten themselves, from a stall, with pepper and vinegar, in Whitechapel. If I fall in, they will say that I went a-shrimping. Come, Joseph Chacomb, pull yourself together—pluck up."

He laid himself flat upon the rough and sloping surface, holding on by one foot and both hands, while he threw his leg round till he met with a projection. Bit by bit he struggled on,

panting and wheezing, for the doctor was not so young as he had been, till he found himself round the point, and with both feet on the narrow and broken ledge on which the captain lay. He made his way cautiously along, and in five minutes was kneeling beside the form which lay apparently inanimate upon the rock.

"Poor beggar! poor beggar!" murmured the doctor; "and to think that he might have been alive and well still if Chauncey had not been an Ass!"

He felt the pulse—the left arm was crushed and broken, lying under the body, but the right appeared to be comparatively uninjured. There was a faint motion—it takes a good deal to beat the life out of a man. The doctor dipped his hat in the sea, and, raising the head, poured the water over it. The captain's face was pale and white; from his mouth oozed the blood drop by drop.

"Revel," whispered the doctor, "Revel, can you speak?"

There was no answer; nothing to show that he heard, or comprehended, or lived—only the dull, slow beating of the pulse at the doctor's finger.

"Oh, that I were on the cliff now!" said Joseph. "What would I give for a boat? And how the deuce am I get him, or myself either, out of this?"

He resolved to try the next point; and stepping lightly over the prostrate form, to which he could do nothing, he crept along the ledge in the same direction, and disappeared behind the next point.

It was half an hour later when he returned in Revel's own boat, rowed by a couple of farm boys. In the boat sat Marion. As the doctor —rough, coarse in grain, selfish, and cynical— looked at the face of the girl, so suddenly stricken that there was no time for weeping, no room for despair, the unaccustomed tears rolled down his cheeks.

They brought It, the poor crushed form, covered with a sheet, home to Comb Leigh in the boat. As they lifted the body, the doctor saw Chauncey Chacomb standing near. By his trembling limbs, by the wan light in his eyes, by his moaning and crying, he saw that the madman only partly understood what had happened, and how. As they bore the captain to

the cottage, Chauncey followed with staggering step. His confused brain knew, in a bewildered sort of way, that he had somehow caused the thing to happen. He could not remember yet; but he was filled with a dreadful terror. He dimly perceived that there would be no rest or happiness for him any more: the seal of Cain, the murderer, was on his brow. But his victim's pulse yet beat, though feebly. For three long hours they waited round the bedside. Marion at his head, dry-eyed; Adie, weeping and sobbing, at the foot of the bed; Chauncey standing helpless and silent, turning his bewildered eyes from one to the other. The sun shone in at the window, where the captain's roses climbed about, throwing their branches across the light, and making fantastic patterns in the shifting shadows of the floor.

Suddenly the watchers saw a change. There was a slight quivering of the limbs, and the captain opened his eyes for a moment.

"He is coming to his senses," the doctor whispered. "He hears, my girl; be brave."

"Father," she whispered, "do you know me?"

As she touched his poor pale lips with hers, he opened his eyes again, and looked at her in a strange, wondering way, with a tender pity in them. His thoughts were all with her—Marion saw it with a wild tumult of misery and happiness—all with her.

Then his lips parted, and she went closer.

"Marion" he whispered, "my poor, poor Marion!—I see it all! It was not my fault. Endure to the end, my darling—and always trust in God. My dear!—my dear!—my dear!"

His eyes both dropped as in very weariness; and presently the doctor, laying his hand upon the captain's heart, found that he had fallen into the sleep from which there is no earthly waking.

CHAPTER X.

A WEEK has passed; the coroner has come to Comb Leigh upon his errand, and by the help of a dozen farmers the inquest has been held. The conduct and appearance of Mr. Chauncey Chacomb, the principal witness, were remarkable: the reporter said that his overmastering grief did equal credit to his heart and to his head. In incoherent accents, and with hesitating tongue, he set forth what was well known to everybody present—how the deceased gentleman and himself had been almost daily companions for many years; and how, while they were talking together on the cliff, the captain's foot slipped, and he fell. Being asked by an intelligent juryman if he knew of any cause—orange peel now, a thing he had heard was fatal

to many a man—why the captain should have slipped, he stated, after the coroner had called attention to the fact that orange peel would be a comparatively rare thing to find in August at the top of the cliff, that he knew of no cause or reason whatever. Being asked by another intelligent juryman if the captain was possibly unwell that morning—bile now, a thing often felt by himself, the questioner, after a market dinner —Mr. Chacomb said that Captain Revel had made no complaint as to biliousness. Being asked if the spot was considered dangerous, Mr. Chacomb said that, on the contrary, he had understood it to be a favourite spot for lovers to sit and watch the view, and that he had never heard of any one under those circumstances falling over. Another juryman interposed with the remark that it was very true, and he had sat there himself in younger days; whereat everybody laughed. From time to time Chauncey Chacomb, while giving his evidence, looked nervously at his cousin, who sat with his head down, but made no sign. The doctor's testimony was given with greater vigour, and bore internal evidence of careful preparation. It

made, as he intended, a profound impression. He had heard, he explained, his cousin Mr. Chauncey Chacomb's cry for help, and on hastening to the place, and looking over the edge of the cliff, saw the deceased gentleman lying on the rocks below. He had then made his way to the spot by a breakneck path, which he described at length with pardonable aggravation of the difficulties, and had finally succeeded in getting round the point and hailing the boat. The jury were unanimous in expressing their highest admiration of Dr. Chacomb's heroism in attempting a rescue. They were also unanimous in concurring that Parliament should be petitioned to put handrails round all cliffs, and provide rope ladders in case of any one falling over. And then they brought in their verdict of "Accidental death." What other verdict was possible? Evil looks do not murder; and who was there except the doctor to say that the man slipped and fell, overcome with confusion at the threatening looks and gestures of his companion?

As for Fred, for whom Gerald had gone in search, he came home in time to attend the

funeral. Not waiting for the paternal permission to go to Egypt, he had started at once, on getting the ten pounds from Marion, with a sanguine confidence that more would follow, and yet with some forebodings how his father might take it. At Paris, he saw the news in *Galignani*, and hastened back. He bore himself steadily at the funeral, and the village folk congratulated each other that the captain's boy was so brave and fine a young fellow, and so admirably qualified to help his sisters.

Marion called upon him, indeed, at once for help, endeavouring to face the realities of the future. But in vain. Her brother would not look at the facts as they were. He put it off; he fenced with the necessity; he refused to read through the papers; he declined to let her know his liabilities. And yet he looked forward with a confident cheerfulness to a wonderful future; for with men of Fred's character it is the leading trait that they never can face anything real.

"You see, dear Fred, we *must* consider things; we have very little money—only the insurance; and we *must* consider what is to be done."

"I think, Marion"—with a yawn—"that it

shows singularly little regard for my poor father's memory to begin this kind of talk the very first day after he is buried. And as for the future, I see no cause for any anxiety at all. I have already told you that Lord Rodney—"

"The firework man. Oh, Fred!"

"Has promised to get me something good. What will it matter, then, that my father has left us no money? I hope, Marion, you will remember that, as the head of the family, I shall always feel it my duty to provide for you and Adie."

Marion repressed her rising irritation.

"Yes, Fred, it is very good of you to say so, and to think so; but Lord Rodney is in Egypt; we do not know when he will come back; and it will not do to trust to vague hopes. We have to pay off your debts first; and what are we to do till your friend finds something that will suit you?"

"Confound it, Marion, do not worry a man! If things look bad, staring at them won't make them look any better. Let us sit down and wait till they come round again. At all events

there is the insurance; and something will turn up."

Always a belief that things, if left alone, would right themselves; always that blind confidence which borders dangerously near the Paradise of fools. It is with certain natures infectious. Adie caught it of her brother. She, too, protested against the folly of anxiety about the future; she, too, found it a flying in the face of Providence to add up bills and think of ways and means; and, with Fred, would leave Marion alone with her papers, to wander along the leafy lanes, and to talk together of the merry days in store for them, and the pleasant paths of careless folly. It might seem safe to prophecy of Fred that there will be few more pleasant lingerings in the sunshine for him; but prophecy—since the school of the Prophets finally broke up and dissolved when Malachi left it—has been an eminently unsafe thing. Some things we know, of course, from long experience. The clever boy of the school becomes a pauper, after a thousand failures; the good boy gets hanged, after a long course of hypocrisy. Any one can prophecy so far; but what shall we say

about the bad and lazy boy? Observers have remarked that though in after-life he continues to wallow in his laziness and badness, like a pig of the flock of Epicurus, he too often gets a good income, a pleasant life, and easy times. "Women," Dr. Chacomb once said to me, "can always, unless they belong to the passive or stupid class, foretell the future. Unfortunately their power is limited, and they are all like Cassandra, inasmuch as they only see the bad things that are coming." Still, that is better than nothing, especially when you get predictions about your enemies' coming misfortunes. Why is it that one-half—the greater half—of mankind have been excluded from the Jewish Prophets? Had it been otherwise, what a screaming sisterhood should we have had! Fancy a dozen Deborahs pouring out the heart's fulness of invective, exultation, and denunciation! Fancy the lost splendours, the tragic predictions, of a wronged and angry Hebrew woman!

Marion, left alone, went carefully through her father's papers. The letters she put aside to be burned; the accounts, and all that seemed to

refer to money, she kept. And so one morning, a few days after the funeral, she came across a secret that sent the blood from her cheek.

A dreadful secret; a shameful secret; a secret that touched the happiness and the self-respect of those dearest to her; a secret that told her why, in the prime of early manhood, her father, an ambitious and active man, could resign his hopes for the future, and take refuge in a country village, where he was unknown, and the thing could not follow him.

"My poor dear father!" she murmured. "He suffered this through all these years, and made no sign. What shall I do, what shall I do to keep it secret? I may at least tell Gerald."

But where was Gerald? He had disappeared. No letter came from him, and he made no sign. It was strange. At Chacomb Hall the two men thought nothing of it; Gerald was not in either's thoughts. At the Rosery there was one at least who looked and waited all the day, who watched and waited all the night. But no news could come; for Gerald, fresh from Brazilian lowlands, was working off a fever—one of half a dozen left in his system as a parting gift of the

Oroonoco swamps—in a hotel at Boulogne, unable to write, and fretting over the delay that kept him from Marion.

It was at this juncture that Joseph Chacomb, quite unexpectedly and to his own astonishment, developed an entirely new side of character. He appeared as the man of sympathy. During the bad days before the funeral he would walk over every morning, and do what work there was to do. When that business was finished, he still came in readiness to work at Marion's request. She ended by liking him and looking for him. He was rough, and he took dreadful views of human nature. Still he was kind. He went through the papers with her—Fred's papers of debts—noting things that might be reduced; while the culprit himself was lying on the grass in the shade, or singing duets with Adie.

"Well, there are all the bills before us. Of course," he said, "we are not going to pay half of them."

"But we must; Fred owes them."

"I know. We need not pay one single farthing, I believe. They are debts contracted in his

minority. Fred is not yet twenty-one. Besides, they are all extravagant debts. You cannot make a minor pay for things manifestly unnecessary. Look here: an Oxford hack, no doubt a broken-winded, spavined, knock-kneed roarer, at two pounds a day; the tennis court at three and sixpence an hour, with a few pounds added in for beer. Where is their licence, Miss Revel? answer me that—where is their licence? And what is this? Rabbit coursing in a dog-fancier's back yard. Could any British jury pass that account—even a jury of small tradesmen? Why, the thing is illegal. Come, Miss Marion, if you pay this bill, I will borrow a guinea of you, give it to the Society for the Suppression of Cruelty to Animals, and make them prosecute the rascal, with your brother for principal witness. As for these bills—champagne at a hundred and twenty shillings, claret at ninety, port at eighty-five—you will just leave me to do what I can for you."

"It is very kind," said Marion; "that is, if it is just."

"Of course it is just. There is one thing I should like to understand: why the young

fellows at Oxford, who belong to exactly the same class as the young fellows at the hospitals, are so much better off in the way of tick. Show me, if you please, the London wine merchant who will trust a medical student with champagne, or even with the homely Bass. Lord, what a delicious time I should have had, with an undergraduate's credit at my back! Look here, again: a bill for badger baiting. Now, you know, that is too barefaced. Fancy having your badger baited on credit! Scoring up chalks for worrying a varmint in a tub! He's a glutton for enjoyment, Fred is."

He bundled all the bills into his pocket.

"Leave it all to me. I will do just the reverse of the unjust steward. I will sit down quickly and write off half: the champagne shall stand at fifty, and that will leave a handsome profit; the port at forty-eight, and that will be dear at the price; and as for the badger baiter, he shall not be paid at all. Miss Revel, the dishonesty of people is to the Christian mind appalling; to the unchristian mind—that is, to me—it shows how very, very few Christian minds there are."

"If they do not accept your offer?" said Marion.

"Then I button up my pockets. Then I say to them, 'Men and brethren, naked came ye into the world; naked, so far as I am concerned, shall ye continue to go through the world.' I beg your pardon, Miss Revel; I mean that they may then proceed to whistle for their money."

"But I could not bear to have Fred laden with debts, perhaps worried and persecuted by lawyers' letters."

"Could you not?" he replied, with a twinkle in his eyes. "Fred would bear it with very great resignation, I am sure."

"Ah, yes, Fred has the sweetest of tempers," said Marion, tenderly.

"Hum! I like tempers a little more snappish. Well, never mind your brother for the present. What can I do for you personally, Miss Revel? Do you propose to remain in this cottage?"

"We are your cousin's tenants—Mr. Chacomb's tenants. Did he ask you to put that question?"

"No, he did not. The fact is, Chauncey is

knocked silly, quite literally. I never knew a man such mournful company as he is. Not that he was ever festive; but of late days—"

"You forget, Dr. Chacomb, that the last few days have not been festive days to any of us."

"Pardon me—I do not forget it. Well, Chauncey has made no allusion whatever to the subject. The question was dictated by my own curiosity—my impertinence, if you will."

"No, no; but I have hardly yet considered it at all. It is so strange to me, looking forward to the future; and yet we must. And Fred is no help to me as yet."

"Then let me be a help."

"You are very kind, Dr. Chacomb. I cannot tell you how grateful I am to you. Please give me your advice about this letter. My father had insured his life for two thousand pounds. I noticed, the day before his death, that very letter lying on his table, and gave it to him. He put it in his pocket, and it was found there afterwards. Will you read it?"

It was an official letter on blue paper, reminding Captain Revel that the days of grace for the payment of the premium would expire on the

13th of August, when the policy, unless the sum was paid, would become null and void.

"He died on the 12th," said Marion.

"Yes." The doctor looked grave. "I suppose we cannot put off the delay on the postman or anybody, can we? He got it on the 11th, or perhaps a week before, and forgot to open it. It looks bad, but it might perhaps be fought."

"What do you mean, Dr. Chacomb?"

"I mean, Miss Revel, that your father's insurance policy is probably a piece of waste paper. You may light candles with it."

"But, Dr. Chacomb, it cannot be. My father has been insured for five and twenty years."

"It can be, because the company have made an iniquitous rule, and because his premium was not paid at a certain date. There is one chance, and only one. Considering the circumstances of the case, your father's long-standing policy, and the rest, thedirectors may concede the point."

"But, Dr. Chacomb, they *must* concede it. I suppose the directors are gentlemen."

"We are all gentlemen in this world. It is a *façon de parler*. The mistake is, to suppose that the fact of our being gentlemen prevents us

from doing dishonourable things, especially when we are on Boards. There is the custom of the trade, which enables a man to break the eighth commandment without a pang. There is the necessity of making money, which really does blacken the moral eye; and when one is on a committee, you see, the moral responsibility is divided. Dirty things are done by directors, which not one of them would do by himself. The railway directors overwork their servants, and overrun their trains. The insurance directors pass an unjust law about the premiums, and rob the children of their inheritance."

"I wish I understood," said Marion.

"It is an easy thing," the doctor went on; "only the actuaries are afraid to let people know how easy it is. Life insurance is an admirable plan of making the long-lived people pay for those who die first. Of course no one minds living a little longer than his neighbours. So many people are born, so many die, every year. It is all, or ought to be, carefully calculated and made out; so that, you see, anybody knows at any time what is his expectation of life. Very well; when your father insured, five and twenty

years ago, he agreed to pay so much a year, so that if he lived long enough he would pay for those who died young; and if not, that he would be paid for by those who lived longer. He was to go on paying all his life, and at a certain day; that was in the bargain."

"Then all my father's money is lost?" said Marion.

"But there is something else. It happens that at any time a policy has a surrender value, which is the greater the longer it has run on. In other words, the insurance company will always pay you a certain sum—which ought not to be an arbitrary sum at all, but a properly advertised one—for giving up the policy. Understand me: your father's policy a month ago, after twenty-five years' premium, was worth a large sum—nothing like his insurance, but still a large sum. Now listen: the insurance companies have robbed us for generations, and are robbing us still. As I have no shares in any of them, I have no interest in hiding the fact. They rob us in the surrender value, which they understate; and they rob us far more when, as in your own case, a premium is not paid, and

they put into their pockets the whole of its surrender value."

"Is there no help?" asked Marion.

"Perhaps; we will try."

He wrote the next day, explaining the circumstance. He first asked for the insurance in full. The secretary reminded him that the policy had lapsed. Then the doctor referred the case to the board, which confirmed the secretary. Then the doctor wrote a long and careful letter, setting forth his revolutionary views as to surrender value. The answer to this was referred to the actuary, who, not having time to write an essay on the subject of life assurance, referred the doctor to the two great standard works on insurance, and begged him to correct his views. The doctor, who enjoyed the correspondence amazingly, thereupon prepared the Prospectus of a Company which propounded an entirely new system of insurance. No one took any notice of his pamphlet, which fell flat upon the market; and Dr. Chacomb, having some other work to do, allowed the matter to drop. The following is an extract from the prospectus.

"EVERY man shall insure for himself, and not for his neighbour, and he shall insure for the expectation of his own life.

"If a man pay one pound at the age of thirty, his expectation of life being then about thirty-three years, he shall receive a policy, not to be forfeited, for the sum of one pound at compound interest for thirty-three years. In other words, he can leave his heirs the sum of nearly three pounds.

"The new insurance company is thus a savings bank, in which nothing but deposit accounts are kept, and from which no money can be taken.

"A man can use his own discretion, by insuring when he pleases, and for what he pleases.

"If a man, for instance, marries at twenty-four, he will be able to insure for a thousand pounds by paying a sum down of not much more than a quarter.

"It is a system which will require very little expense of management.

"The new company will take ten per cent. out of profits, but not more, and will be paid off;

after which the rate of interest on insurance will be lowered.

"The new company will engage the services of Joseph Chacomb, Esq., M.D., as secretary and manager, at a salary of one thousand pounds per annum, guaranteed for five years, in consideration of the idea. Dr. Chacomb will also be the consulting physician."

It was a beautiful prospectus, and I have always thought it contained the germs of a just and prudent idea. But then I am not an actuary. As regards the letters, they gradually ceased, and the usual result happened—that the company won. But let us return to the present.

Marion laid before her only adviser a paper on which she had put down the family resources as clearly as she had calculated them. The list began with the insurance, through which the doctor ran his pen.

"We will talk about that afterwards. Now let us see. Deducting the arrangement I shall make with your brother's creditors, there will remain in the bank a hundred and fifty pounds;

your own little fortune, settled on yourself, of fifty pounds a year; and the furniture of the cottage. Is this absolutely all?"

"I am afraid it is all we have. Oh, Dr. Chacomb, do not say that they will take away all our insurance money!"

"I can say nothing till I have heard from the office; but let us talk as if they were going to be rogues—most men in committee are, you know. And so, my dear young lady, on that supposition, what do you propose to do with those two children playing on the lawn?"

They were literally playing on the lawn, and, with the carelessness that belonged to their character, laughing and singing while they played. Marion looked, and sighed.

"I have hardly begun to think about it. What can I do? What are we all to do? And oh, Dr. Chacomb, where is Gerald? Why does he not come to us?"

"We do not know. Surely, Miss Revel, if any one knew, you would."

It was an arrow shot at a venture.

"Yes; but I have not heard from him since

he went to London. Where can he be? I am not able to think about anything else till I have a letter from him."

"She *is* engaged to him, then," thought the doctor, with great satisfaction.

"Have you spoken to Mr. Chacomb yet?" he asked, aloud.

"Not yet. Gerald was to have spoken. It was only the day before . . . . and when my poor father left the house for the last time it was on his way to Chacomb Hall, to tell his old friend—his old friend," she repeated, thoughtfully. "Mr. Chacomb does not like me. He never did. What will he say when he hears of our engagement?"

"What can he say, Miss Revel, except to welcome the daughter of his friend?"

"I do not know. I have sometimes watched him when he thought no one was looking, and was perhaps off his guard. I think Gerald's father is somehow an unhappy man. He has feelings that he hides; secret thoughts that he does not like to show to the world. I have seen him look at my father—his daily companion—with an expression that seemed full of suspicion,

hatred, and revenge. Then he would turn to me, and it was with eyes of dislike. I used to laugh, thinking of it afterwards. But I do not laugh now; for what may it mean to me?"

"It means that the squire will be proud of his new daughter, when Gerald takes you home."

"Ah, when Gerald takes me home! When will that be? When will that be? Where is he now?"

"At all events, Miss Revel, Gerald is not a man to trouble himself much about what his father thinks. At least, I should not if I were Gerald."

This was a speech to which there could be no reply.

Dr. Chacomb arranged with her about his visit to Oxford, gave her the name of a solicitor under whose care she was to place the slender family fortunes, and left her for the time. On the lawn Fred and Adie were lightening the load of anxiety with an extemporized Badminton, though that pastime was not yet known to the world.

"Battledore and shuttlecock is a very healthy exercise, Fred Revel," said the adviser—"capital for children, I believe. Can you walk a little way with me?"

"With pleasure."

The young man's face did not manifest any lively emotion of joy, but he desisted from his game, tossed the toys to Adie, and lounged into the road after the doctor, yawning heavily.

"You find Comb Leigh dull after Oxford?"

"Dull!" said Fred. "It's dead and buried, put away and forgotten. However, under the sad circumstances, I must stay here to advise the girls, and arrange the future for them, dull though it is."

"Of course," said the doctor, with a smile of cynical delight, "they naturally look to you, as the head of the family, for support and guidance. What would Marion do with the accounts without you?"

Fred reddened a little.

"I wish I could support them," he said, honestly. "I sincerely wish I saw my way. Can you give me any advice, Dr. Chacomb?"

"Let us sit down," said the doctor. "The

road is dusty at this season, and steep at all seasons. As the poet says:—

> 'These confounded long hills and rough, uneven ways
> Draw out our miles and make them wearisome.'

I will light a cigar, if you do not object."

He lit one—it was one of Gerald's, the doctor having been so fortunate as to secure the whole box in the absence of its owner—but neglected to offer one to Fred.

"I like being in the country," he said, stretching his legs in the shade of the hazel shrubs, and sitting on the grass by the roadside, "if it is only for the comfort of a cigar in the open. Comb Leigh is a delicious spot for a meditative weed. Now, my young friend, you want my advice. Good; I am forty-five, and you are twenty. I have the advantage over you of a quarter of a century. I wish it was the other way about, because I would a great deal rather be twenty than forty-five. But, as Horace says—

> 'The fleeting years go by, my friends,
> Time borrows what he never lends;
> Youth doth not save, but always spends,
> Drinks all the wine that Heaven sends,
> And burns his candles at both ends.'

And so on. You are fresher from college than myself, and may go on with the quotation."

"Tell me what you would advise me to take up as a profession?"

"That is the most difficult thing of all to do. Let us see. Can you keep accounts?"

"No; I never could add up, except the points at whist."

"Do you write a good hand?"

"Am I a clerk?"

"You would not be likely to pass any competitive examination, I suppose?"

"Oh, no! That is why I am afraid—only I don't like to tell Marion so—that Lord Rodney's influence will not be of much use to me."

"Ah, some young fellows, without any turn for books, pick up a pretty fair living as parsons. Just now it pays better than it used to. Would you—? No? Very well, then. I put the law out of the question, because, without reading something, it is, I am sorry to say, impossible to get anything in the legal profession. Some men —myself included—do pretty well at the medical line, without injuring the delicate structure of the cerebellum over the preliminary studies."

"Nothing could make me read anatomy."

"Then we must leave the beaten paths, and try the unrecognized professions. My artless young friend, there are many pleasures in belonging to an unrecognized profession. You hold an uncertain social status, which has its charms; you are a kind of Bohemian, which relieves you of many moral duties; you are not expected to exhibit any more virtues than you like; you find the way open for association, particularly of a convivial nature, with crowds of good fellows, impecunious like yourself; you are always devising new combinations for making money, which sharpens your wits till they grow as keen as a razor; and the profits, my young friend, the profits, if you do make a *coup*, are sometimes very handsome."

The doctor spoke with the enthusiasm of experience.

"But what are these professions?"

"Their name is legion. I call myself a doctor; but I belong in reality, for my practice is but small, to the tribe of adventurers. Doing things on commission is the first method that occurs to me. You may sell anything on com-

mission, but some things are not pleasant. I knew a man once, formerly in the Carabineers, who took to selling antibilious pills; they gave him a very handsome per centage indeed, but twelve months of the work aged him more than five and twenty previous years of hard drinking. Some men recommend shops to their friends, and get a commission from the shopkeeper—members of club committees do it, I believe, and it seems an easy way of making money; but it does not last. You can't be always recommending people to go to different places to buy things; and then the shop people cheat you shamefully in your commissions. They have no sense of honour, that class. A friend of mine in this walk of life was once very cruelly treated by a cigar dealer, after introducing a young millionaire who actually smoked himself to death off his shilling Havanas. Coals are not bad, though they have a bad name. But then, you see, so many people go into coals. You want nothing but an office, and you are not obliged to buy a single ton. You get up the patter, and then you are a dummy, and all your orders go to the real people, who pay you ten

per cent. Agencies are good, provided you can hit on one not yet driven to death; but, Lord, the rapacity of people is dreadful to think of! A gentleman adventurer in these days has to fight very hard, whatever line he takes up. Literature, I suppose, you would have no taste for, though some literary friends of mine have managed to get along without reading anything except old magazines and the *Annual Register*. How should you like to be an advertising agent? It is a business which depends entirely upon personal appearance and manners. You would have a very good chance—a very good chance indeed."

"I don't like any of your professions," said Fred. "It does not seem to me that a gentleman would take up a single one of those lines."

"A gentleman!" said the doctor, impatiently. "I should like to write an essay, if I were an author—they are a scaly lot, and thank Heaven I am not one—on the word. Formerly it meant everybody who wore the king's uniform; now it means everybody who does not. Young man, put your gentility in your pocket till you can afford to take it out again. A gentleman out at

elbows, and pretending to be a gentleman still, is a sorry spectacle. Let us see if we can find anything else for you. Remember, however, that we cannot escape certain laws. If we have no money, we must work or starve. Obviously, the thing is to get the lightest work possible. You have been trained to nothing; you have to find some work that you can do; you have, in short, to prove yourself capable of inventing your own path in the world."

"It would not be quite the thing, would it, for the representative of a great French name to be selling coals on commission?" Fred asked, with his sweetest smile, and as if the question was a clincher.

"Representative—nonsense! Will your countship fill your pockets? Will it keep you and your sisters? Will it give you decent clothes? If not, forget it as fast as you can. I've known a good many loose fish in the world; the worst I ever knew was an Honourable without a farthing, who found it impossible to forget his birth. Look you, Mr. Frederick Revel, I like to call things by their right names. You have already wasted and squandered the whole of the

little patrimony saved for yourself and your sisters by your father; and you have got nothing to show for it. You have been sent to expensive schools, and only learned the art of getting tick. You are twenty years of age, and you have your living to get. What will you do?"

"I do not know your right—"

"Very likely not. You may make up your mind to work, or you may make up your mind to parade your gentility. Gentleman, indeed! When shall we hear the last of the old, worn-out rubbish?"

Fred was silent.

"You must, if you work at all, begin with the humblest kind of work—farm work even—or you must take up with some such line as I have shown you. Of course you may, if you please, live upon the very small fortune and the exertions of your sister."

"You presume, sir," said Fred, "on the trifling services you have rendered us. Your advice is insulting and ungentlemanly. I shall not live upon my sister's exertions, nor shall I become a tout and a cad. You will please to give me no more advice."

He turned on his heel, and left the doctor.

"I know the breed," said Joseph, watching the young man as he hurried down the lane with impatient gestures—"I know the breed well. They kick and fume when they hear the truth. They are full of noble sentiments; they are your lip gentlemen. I know the receding chin, the shifty lips which curve into what novelists call a sweet smile; and I know the bright eye, with what the same gentry call a hundred laughs lying in it, which looks as if there was nothing but sincerity and unselfishness behind. I suppose the lad got it from his mother. Wonder who his mother was? 'The dancing eye,' as they call it, means a callous heart. I never knew a fellow with it yet who would budge a step to oblige anybody. That is an aphorism presented by Joseph Chacomb, Esq., M.D., to literature generally. The dancing eye means the callous heart. It's very neat. Give me the quiet eyes of Marion. Happy beggar, Gerald!—unless he's got into trouble. Wonder where he is? Maybe gone dead, like the captain; in which case—" he was growing calmly meditative in the bright sunshine, and

lay back making his gentle reflections, and yawning—"in which case, ah-h! it wouldn't be bad for me. I should begin by locking up Chauncey.

"Wonder if I was like that boy when I was twenty-one. Think not. I knew more of the world. There were the makings of a very fine man about Joe Chacomb, only he had not the fair start. Might have been different—Joe might—if he had had the Chacomb rents instead of the little Ass up yonder. Forty-five last month, and nothing done yet—no money in the Funds, nothing to chuck away in foreign mines, and nothing in the Bank. As for his moral character, Joe's best friends—that is, the men who know him best—don't believe he has got any morals at all. Once Joe was a mealy-faced boy, with a rosy cheek. Joe was one of the little cherubim; sang anthems, Joe did, in a church choir, with a white nightgown on, like a blessed angel. Life is rum—very rum. Joe would be uncomfortable now among the blessed angels. He wouldn't know how to handle his harp; he's forgotten the treble of all the anthems, and can't sing bass. Joe makes schemes of plunder; Joe

borrows without intending to pay back; Joe wants to see Gerald marry the Revel girl, and get cut off by his idiotic father. Joe is no longer a cherub at all—unless he is one of those unlucky cherubs who've tumbled down. After all"—he sat up and stretched himself, with a yawn--"we are as things have made us. Joe isn't any worse than his neighbours. It is beautiful weather, and this is a lovely cigar."

CHAPTER XI.

DURING these days Chauncey Chacomb kept entirely at home, and refused to go outside the gates of the lodge. His cousin, who watched him with an interest growing daily, observed that a curious change was creeping over the squire's expression. His very features seemed changed. There had been formerly a look of cunning and suspicion latent in the man's face, which always made themselves felt in the sharp, quick upward glances of his small keen eyes. That was gone. His occasional wild glances, apparently uncontrollable, which first roused the doctor's suspicions, disappeared as well. There were no more bursts of a jealous rage, perhaps because the object of the rage was dead; but in place of all these there was left a settled gloom, a sad-

ness which never varied. The spare form was shrunken. Chauncey Chacomb had become smaller; his head was lower between his shoulders; he stooped as he walked; he noticed nothing. If his cousin plied him with wine at dinner, he drank it, and remained as dismal as if it had been cold tea. He made no reference to the absence of his son, paid no attention to external matters, and made no sign of interest in anything, except that he heard the name of Revel with a visible shrinking and horror. The worst sign was that he neglected the Collection; he forgot to correct the Catalogue; he locked up his drawers, and left the keys on his dressing-table; and he spent the day in wandering aimlessly about from room to room.

"Go," said Joseph Chacomb one morning, pushing him into the Collection room—"go and potter about as you used to; that will do you good."

Chauncey made no resistance; but when, an hour later, the doctor opened the door, he found him sitting in a straight-backed chair, in the middle of the room, his thoughts far away from any of his curiosities.

Then he watched his cousin more closely. He observed that every day after breakfast Chauncey manifested a keen desire to be left alone. One morning he pretended to go out, but returned after the space of five minutes. He found that Chauncey had crept away to Gerald's rooms, which were, as has been stated, in the western gable, the old part of the house. Hither, when Chauncey began to make his Collection, had been transported gradually the old shelves of books which once formed the library. They were ranged in rows in Gerald's study, Gerald's bed-room, and the room which Gerald used for his workshop: an old and curious library, consisting almost entirely of French eighteenth century books, those works of learning in which the French of that time excelled. People got together materials in the sixteenth century; they learned in the seventeenth; they boiled down, digested, annotated, and correlated in the eighteenth. Every kind of subject was treated of in this cyclopædic collection, which was especially rich in books on medicine. The doctor, stepping silently over the carpets in the direction pointed out by the footman, passed

through the open doors, and found Chauncey in Gerald's bed-room. He was not sighing over the vacant place of his son; he was not shedding a tear over the portrait of his son's mother, which hung upon the wall; he was not thinking of son or mother either, because he was thinking of himself. He was standing at the shelves, with a book in his hands, swiftly devouring the contents. Dr. Chacomb marked the eager and concentrated gaze of his eyes, as he read page after page, turning over swiftly, as if he sought for something that concerned himself. Presently he put back the book with a heavy sigh, and sat down. The doctor marked the volume—it was an old calf-bound octavo, whose gilt lettering was faded so that he could not read the name, but he saw its place among the rest. Then, having made his observation, he slipped away, and presently his cousin came out, with a dejected air, and crept like some scared and sick animal into the shade of the trees of his park. Then the doctor sought the place, and took down the volume. It was a French treatise on hallucinations and diseases of the brain.

"I thought so," said the doctor. "The poor

little beggar has quite gone out of his wits. We may as well see what he has been reading, anyhow."

He carried the book away with him, and read in it that night before going to bed. There was a strange and dreadful fascination about the pages. They fixed the eyes on the letters, while the vivid images of haunting heads seemed to crowd round the reader, to float around his brain, and to whisper in his ears. The doctor threw it away at last, with a shudder. Before getting into bed he opened the window and looked out. On the lawn, a silver sheet lit by the splendid harvest moon, was walking backwards and forwards his cousin Chauncey, swinging his arms, tossing them over his head, rolling about as if he were drunk. He looked at his watch. It was two o'clock.

"I wonder if he has been carrying on this game every night," he murmured. "Upon my word, I don't like it. Why, hang it, he might come in and murder a man while he was asleep."

He hastened to lock and bolt the door, and then, feeling a little safer, he went to bed and to sleep.

Next day he tried to rouse his cousin. He made him go with him for a walk, almost dragging him by the arm.

"Chauncey," he said, "you are getting worse company than ever. I wish I could only hear you swear a little. Try, my dear fellow, just one small damn, to break the ice."

Chauncey shook his head mournfully.

"I fear I shall never swear again, Joe," he murmured. "Never again."

"Don't say that, Chauncey," returned his cousin, really affected at this dreary prospect; "you are young yet, and while there's life there's hope. Pull yourself together."

But he would not be coaxed into cheerfulness.

Then the doctor tried bullying. It was after dinner. Now, Joseph Chacomb, who was not at all times—owing to pecuniary conditions—accustomed to what the Americans call a square meal, was making the most of his stay at Chacomb. The dinner, when he was at the Hall, was like Mr. Cook's tours—personally conducted. He ordered it and looked after it himself, down to the potatoes, which he liked served as a separate dish, to remind him of the merry days when he

was a student in the Quartier Latin; and to the beer, which he drank from a tankard, to remind him of hospital days in London—for the doctor liked to be sentimental over his dinner. In the same spirit of poetical reminiscence, he chose every day a bottle of Chauncey's best and oldest port, of which he drank every drop, to remind him of the aspirations which had once filled his brain. Naturally, after the port he wanted conversation, and then found himself with a man who neither spoke nor moved.

"I would rather sit with the Aldgate pump, Chauncey. Hang me if the pump would not be a more lively companion. At least it could wag a handle. What are you staring at? Do shut your eyes, man; and if you must stare, look at me."

His cousin was sitting with his short legs tucked under his chair; his uneven shoulder was level with his right ear, and his head bent down to meet it. The room was dark, save for a pair of wax candles on the table; the windows were open, for it was a sultry night, and thunder was in the air. Chauncey Chacomb was staring straight before him, into the darkest part of the room, with a steadfast gaze.

"Don't glare in that way, Chauncey. It's simply disgusting to a man who wants to be cheerful. Tell me, my dear fellow," he continued, quite softly—"tell me, if you can, what you see every night. Tell me why you go out into the park when you ought to be asleep."

"Always the same thing, Joseph—always the same thing. I see Revel's eyes. There—there—there!" he shrieked, as a gleam of summer lightning lit up the room for a moment. "He is here himself. I saw his face as well as his eyes. And yet he is dead. Joseph, help me! Oh, cousin Joseph, help me! It is dreadful to see a dead man's face."

His voice dropped to a low wail. He sank his head into his hands, and bowed himself upon the table, covering his eyes and moaning.

The doctor shivered, and looked round him uneasily. The dining-room was dark with crimson paper and heavy hangings.

"I hate a place where there is no gas," he murmured. "And I hate a room like this, which nothing will light up. Here, Chauncey, old man, wake up! We will go into the drawing-room, and light all the lamps and candles.

Come, I will play you backgammon for sixpence a game, if you like."

This was genuine self-denial on the part of Joseph, because he hated backgammon; and, like a great many poor men with grand ideas of money, he despised sixpences. Chauncey got up, and followed his cousin in silence. Presently, he recovered so far as to take an interest in the game. He won three in succession, and putting up the sixpences in his pocket, went so far as to chuckle. But then he relapsed suddenly into his former moody state, and sat intently watching nothing.

When the doctor had put him to bed, with a little dose of morphia, he proceeded to consider the position.

"Which," he said, "I cannot say I like. It is not interesting, and it does not promise to be profitable. I am wasting my time here—time is valuable at five and forty—when I ought to be back in town. Things will go wrong if I stay idling here, and I do not understand what I shall gain by waiting on. I believe Chauncey has gone mad; but I don't see just yet how that will do any good to me. That Revel girl runs

in my head. I believe I shall end by seeing her eyes just as Chauncey sees the captain's. Perhaps something has happened to Gerald; but it is no use expecting that. Let us see. Gerald comes back; Gerald marries the girl—as if that ought not to be enough for any young fellow. His father cuts him off—but his father is mad. Then who is to prove it? Suppose I say he is sane. The worst of making calculations about what is going to happen is, that what you expect never does happen. The best scheme is disconcerted by the one thing that is least likely. After all, the cleverest man is the man who knows how to use things as they turn up, and at once. It is no use making a book on the events. I shall wait and see what turns up."

The time wore on, with no news from Gerald.

"Let us wait still," said the doctor.

But it was weary waiting for Marion. The past was gone, and with it all the promise of golden fruit. The future was dark, the present was a blank.

One day—a fortnight after the death of her father—Marion could bear the suspense no

longer. At least she could see Mr. Chacomb, and tell him all.

It was in the morning—such a morning as that when she sat in the garden and fell asleep, to be awakened by the tramp of feet that brought back her dying father. The house was quiet and lonely, for the other two had gone out together. The sight of the flowers, the wind in the trees, the songs of the birds, all fell upon her nerves like blows upon some heavy instrument.

She left the cottage, and turned into the lane that led to Chacomb Hall.

She met no one on the road. Had she been in a mood to mark them, the flowers of early autumn were springing in the hedges at her feet, and she would have rejoiced in the sounds and sights of Nature which called to her unheard as with a voice of sympathy. But Marion had no eyes or ears. She was listening to the voices of her thoughts, which were sad and heavy. In a fitful way, as people do when they are disturbed by some great sorrow, she noticed little things which passed across her brain, assuming great importance for the moment, and then vanishing. Behind those evanescent images lay the shadow

of her sorrow, and with it the heavy prescience of more trouble. She recalled the words of her father, the last time they were together; the last talk with her lover—and where was Gerald? Dark and boding were the spectres of her brain, like those of Sisera's mother when her son lay murdered by the woman whom Deborah blessed above all women. "Why is his chariot long in coming?" But she could not return answer to herself even in words, "Has he not sped?" She came to the stone pillars and the iron gates of Chacomb Hall, and looked up the long avenue of elms, cool and shady, which led to the house. Then, after a moment's hesitation, she left the road, and walked quickly up the drive. On either hand lay Chacomb Park, with its broad stretches of grass and clumps of trees. At the end of the avenue she could see the western gable, with its warm red brick, its pointed roof, and its latticed windows. These were Gerald's rooms. Her pulse quickened when she saw them. Perhaps—perhaps there might be news of Gerald. Presently, in the shadiest and darkest part of the avenue, where there lay on either side thick plantations, there came across her

path and stood in front of her—as Apollyon met Christian—the man she partly hoped but greatly feared to meet: Gerald's father. When he saw the girl coming, he threw up both his arms, and cried aloud—

"Why do you come here? What have I to do with you? Why do you come to me in your black dress? Do you accuse me? Do you dare to say I did it?"

"Accuse you, Mr. Chacomb?" she stammered.

"Then why are you here?"

"I came to ask if you know—if you have heard anything about Gerald."

"Gerald—Gerald?" he replied, impatiently. What is all this about Gerald? He is away—he has been away for four years. Stay; my memory is confused. Gerald came back again. He was at home for four days, and now he has gone. I forget things very strangely. Where has he gone to?"

"You are not well, Mr. Chacomb?"

"I am quite well. That is, Marion, I am not well, and the doctor watches me about. I have dreadful dreams. Sometimes I think I did it."

"Did what?"

He looked cunningly out of his small eyes.

"No—no; I am not going to tell you that. Let us talk of something else."

As he spoke a change came over him, and he seemed to become quite suddenly quiet, self-contained, and impenetrable.

"You came to ask after Gerald, Marion?" he said. "Pardon my brusqueness this morning. I was thinking of other things, and am not quite well. Yes; it is a great anxiety to me that I do not know anything about my son. He is, however, sure to return soon. The sad news, when it reaches him, will bring him home. He was always fond of your poor father."

"I hope he will come back soon," said Marion, sadly. "Do you know that we are going away, Mr. Chacomb?"

"No. Are you going away? Actually going to leave the cottage? Where shall I find another tenant? Going to—where are you going to?"

He spoke as if he was uncertain whether to be pleased or sorry.

"We are going to London. We have no money at all now. The wicked insurance people

refuse to pay my poor father's policy. We are going to sell all that we can, and move to where we can get employment of some kind—whatever kind may suit us."

"Aye—aye," he replied. "Well, Miss Revel, you have my good wishes, my very good wishes. I should think that your brother's talents would be quite certain, directly they find a proper scope, a fitting channel, to put your sister and yourself in affluence."

"Poor Fred! I fear we cannot depend entirely upon him. I shall try to get some work for myself."

"Quite right; quite right. Many ladies get work for themselves nowadays, I hear, and do not mind it very much."

"It is not a question of whether we mind it or not," said Marion; "we have to do it."

"Dear me, dear me!—that is very sad."

"I want to talk to you about Gerald, Mr. Chacomb," said Marion, blushing.

"My son Gerald. Yes, yes—oh, certainly," said the squire, blandly.

"Tell me, Mr. Chacomb, did Gerald say anything to you ever about me?"

Mr. Chacomb shook his head, and looked surprised.

"Did he tell you that—that we were engaged?"

"He did not," said Mr. Chacomb, with decision.

"I suppose he had no time. We were engaged, with my father's consent—"

"Oh, with your father's consent! Your father agreed to it, did he?"

"The day before—before the dreadful day my father went out to talk it over with you. He met you on the hill; did he say nothing—nothing at all to you?"

"How could he find time to say anything, Miss Revel?"

"Then I must tell you, for it is right that you should know," said the girl. "Gerald told me in the afternoon—we were sitting on the very place where my father fell—that he—he loved me; and I accepted him. In the evening we told my father."

"Gerald had a father too," said the squire.

"He promised to tell you about it. Why did he not?"

"Young lady," said Mr. Chacomb, with dignity, and slowly, "you had better take the very first train to London, you and your brother and sister. It may save future unpleasantness. As the engagement has only been entered upon for one day, to speak correctly, I think we may consider at once that it has never been made. You think me unkind. Perhaps; but I wish you to know the truth. Understand, if you please, once for all, and clearly, that under no circumstances should I have consented to your marriage with my son—under no circumstances—none. And certainly not now—certainly not now."

She looked at him with much the same eyes as he remembered in her father. He was staggered for a moment, but presently went on again, with dignity—

"It would be best for all of you to go away at once, before Gerald returns. I can then explain to him my reasons, if I choose to do so, for refusing my consent. It never could have been given, remember. Gerald Chacomb is heir to the Chacomb estate; he must marry position and wealth. Besides—but my reasons have nothing to do with you."

"Nothing," said Marion, proudly. "At least, I have told you I am engaged to Gerald. What your reasons may effect with him I do not know, and cannot tell. But I am engaged to Gerald until he releases me. Now I understand—now I understand."

"What do you understand? What do you mean?"

She looked at him steadily, trying to put a sudden gleam of conviction into her words.

"Now I understand the expression that I used to catch sometimes in your eyes, when you looked at my poor father. Mr. Chacomb, you hated him. I know it now. And you rejoice at our misfortunes. You were with him at his death. You have not told us yet why, when you two were together on the cliff, my father, who had walked there a thousand times, fell over, and only one was left. Why did my father fall?"

The words were spoken at random, but the man turned pale and trembled. He answered nothing, but his lips moved.

"Why did my father stop and fall?" repeated the girl.

"I do not know," he stammered—"I do not

know. How can I tell? He slipped, he fell. You heard my evidence at the inquest. Go and ask everybody if it is not true. How dare you say such things? How dare you ask such questions?"

"Why did you hate him, Mr. Chacomb?" she went on, quickly. "Was it because he was kind, and you are cruel; because he was unselfish, and you are selfish; because he was loved by everybody, and you—are not; because he was frank and sweet-tempered, and you are jealous and suspicious? Were these your reasons, Mr. Chacomb, for hating a good man?"

She stopped for a moment, and continued, with a softer voice—

"You are Gerald's father—that is why we tried to like you. I see now that it was labour lost. When Gerald and I marry, it will not be to come here. Your permission will not be asked. I shall never pretend to love you, any more than you can love me. For I know too much—I understand too much. But I am engaged to Gerald still, and shall remain pledged to him until he releases me himself."

The blood ran hotly to his cheeks, and he moved his hands uneasily.

"You shall never marry him—do you hear? You shall never marry him. I would rather that Gerald was lying dead before me in the path. I would rather—rather—"

She interrupted him fiercely—

"Rather say I fell from the cliff, Mr. Chacomb."

The words fell from her lips before she understood their full meaning. They produced a strange effect upon him. He shifted his feet, and turned his head about as a man troubled with a sudden sharp spasm of pain. But he mastered this, and drew himself upright, reaching to the shoulder of the tall girl before him.

"Then," he said, calmly, "if you will have the truth, hear it. Marry my son if you like—marry Gerald if you can. But if you do, you will marry the son of your father's murderer. Yes," he continued, as she recoiled with a cry—"his murderer. I did it. I pushed him over the edge. I always hated him, and I never, somehow, got a good, safe opportunity till then of doing him a mischief. He drove me mad, too, all the way up the hill, talking of you and Gerald, and what fine things he was going to do

when you were married, with my money—my money. I had no knife, or pistol, or anything to kill him with, or I should have done it when I was walking behind him in the lane. He laughed at me the day before about my pictures, too. It was not likely I was going to forget that. So, when we came to the edge, I pushed him over. He fell very quick, Marion, so that I had only a short opportunity of seeing him roll over and over; but I lay down when he was gone, and mocked him from the edge. I think he heard what I said—at least, I hope so. If I had you in the same place, Marion Revel, I would push you over too. It is a nice wild spot for lovers to sit and talk, is it not? and a nice wild spot for people to wreak their revenge on their enemies. I cannot harm you here, because I should be found out; and my constant principle is never to be found out. For instance, I had thought of poisoning him with a pill, but I kept putting it off because I was afraid. I am glad now that I did not. That damned cousin of mine finds out most things, and he is always watching and following me about. He would have found out, very

likely, if I had used the pill. Well," he went on, with great steadiness, "you know the truth now. I do not suppose for a moment that you will want to marry Gerald after what I have told you. Take my advice, and go to London at once, to avoid any more trouble. I am a dangerous man, and if you don't accede to my wishes, I shall very likely do a mischief to your brother Fred, or perhaps to your sister. Go at once, I say, and before a worse thing happens."

The girl, stunned by the cruelty and horror of the thing, could make no answer. Mr. Chacomb's voice rose to a shriek as he began his last sentence, but sank into a sort of moan as he finished it; for he saw before him the doctor, walking up the avenue.

He came straight to the squire, and took him by the arm.

"Better go in, Chauncey—go in, and wait for me. Go, I say!"

Then Mr. Chacomb turned quietly, and walked away.

"Has he been talking wildly, Miss Revel? I am sorry you met him. Chauncey is a little —no, if you please, not a little, but a good deal

upset just at present. The suddenness of the calamity of last week affected his nerves, and he does not know what he says. You see, he is quite amenable with me: he knows his excitable nature, and obeys orders at least."

"Is it excitement? Is it madness?"

"Who can say what is madness and what is not?"

"I know he hated my father," said Marion. "That must have been madness. But now, I know more. Poor Gerald!" she added, softly, "it is very hard on him; and now it must all be over."

"Why must it be all over?"

"I cannot tell you. It is another secret that I must bear in silence. Dr. Chacomb, help me, in the name of Heaven, to get away from this horrible place. The air stifles me. I am always finding something new and dreadful. There is murder in it, and madness, and horror. Oh, what shall I do—what shall I do?"

"Tell me what Chauncey has been saying. Has he been talking wildly?"

"No; he has been talking sense. Ah, me! he has been talking sense."

"Then it is the first time for a week and more. Miss Marion, if you will tell me nothing, I can only obey your orders. You shall go to-morrow, if you will. I will send after you the furniture that you will want in London. Perhaps it will be best to get out of his way, and to go at once. Now let me know how I may help you with Gerald."

She clasped her hands tightly, to keep down the tears that rose to her eyes and the sobs to her throat.

"It is too much to bear," she moaned—"it is too much. What have I done, what has my poor father done, that he should be punished like this? It is but a week ago—no, a week ago we were in wretchedness—only a fortnight ago the world was bright and happy. I had his love, my dear father's love, and Gerald's too. But that was only for one day. I had one day of the most perfect happiness that a girl can have in this world. I had Gerald's hand in mine; his lips touched mine; I saw his eyes soften as they met mine—oh, what happiness, what happiness! It all vanished in a moment. And now his own father, my Gerald's father, sets between us a

barrier that can never be passed. I must give him up."

"Let nothing that Chauncey Chacomb has said make you give up Gerald," said the doctor. "He is mad; how mad I cannot say, but mad enough to make his words wild. Forget what he has said."

"I cannot forget what he has done. Oh, cruel, cruel!"

She sat upon a fallen trunk and sobbed. Joseph Chacomb watched her with a pity which penetrated even the triple folds of selfishness which wrapped his heart.

"I will go," she said. "Thank you for all your kindness to me. I cannot tell you how I thank you. We will go to London to-morrow. Anything, anything to get away from this dreadful place. I will write a letter to Gerald, and send it to you for him. When he comes back you will give it him. Promise me that, without my permission, you will not tell him where we are."

"It is odd," thought the doctor, "that now, at this most important juncture, when I ought to want her to marry Gerald above all things, my

own interests seem nowhere. Can I be growing sympathetic—I, who have always been preaching self-interest? It is only a troubled girl, only a woman breaking her heart, and I must needs help her because she bids me."

"I promise," he said. "You shall do with me as you please. I will keep your address a secret till you bid me speak. But think again. Do not set the words of a miserable creature like Chauncey Chacomb against the happiness of your life. Do not turn Gerald away because his father has said harsh things. If Gerald were here himself to plead—"

"Ah!" she caught at the words with a gasp. "If Gerald were here himself it would be harder to say, but sweeter to remember. We should part in love, and I should have his farewell. Now, oh, now what will he think of me—what will he think of me? for I can tell him nothing."

"In God's name," cried Joseph, moved out of himself, "what has Chauncey said? What mischief has he brewed in your mind?"

She shook her head, and gave him her hand.

"Good-bye. I will write you a letter for Gerald to-night—if I can, if I can."

She left him, and sped swiftly down the avenue, with bowed head.

Joseph Chacomb looked after her with something like moisture in his eye. Then he blew his nose.

"I have not felt so," he said, "since I went to the Adelphi for the first time, and saw Celeste play Janet Pride. I thought I had mastered the weakness. What the deuce! It was not I who made this girl's trouble; it was not my fault, I suppose, that Chauncey broke out in a new place; it was not through me. I believe that Chauncey—and what can he have told her, I wonder? Things in this world never go straight. It is just as I said last night: make every allowance and the most careful calculation, have your combinations arranged like a professional bookmaker, down comes an accident that no one foresees, and smashes it all up. Only a week ago—to be sure, I did think Chauncey cracked, even before this last business—I saw the most beautiful, the most fortunate chance. Gerald, who is as headstrong as a mule, was going to marry the girl, in spite of his father; there was going to be a grand family kick-up;

the crooked little animal, with a brain as unsettled as his body, was going to leave everything to me. I know his life is a bad one, and this place, with its lovely income, was going to be mine. It is too bad, upon my word! No will would stand a contest with Chauncey as mad as a hatter. The servants will talk, if no one else does. It is a splendid stake missed. And now we must confine ourselves to smaller operations. At all events, let us borrow all we can. The wise man, like Joseph Chacomb, gathers his roses while he may. Poor Marion! the girl's eyes are enough to melt the heart of St. Anthony."

Six days afterwards—the Revels gone—Gerald appeared, worn and weak from his fever, and ignorant of what had happened. Joseph Chacomb told him in a few words.

"Gone? Marion gone? And without waiting to see me?"

"She is gone. All the village children are crying after her still; but she has left a letter for you."

Gerald tore it open.

"What is this?" he cried, fiercely. "Do you know the contents of this letter?"

"I know," said the doctor, "that she asked me to give you a letter containing her farewell to you, and that she made me promise not to give you her address without her permission."

"It is your doing! I believe this is your doing!" the young man burst out.

"It is not," returned the doctor. "I am innocent of any knowledge even of Miss Revel's reason. She refused to tell me. You may believe me, Gerald, when I assure you that I wanted above all things to see you married, and to her."

"Then who—do you know—for God's sake tell me something!—do you know anything, the smallest thing, that could make her write this letter? Read it, read it slowly, and try to account for it."

The doctor read as follows:—

"DEAR GERALD — A thing has happened which will prevent our ever being to each other what we hoped to be. Think kindly of me—indeed, it is not my fault! I pray you earnestly not to try to see me. Forget me, and forget the words we spoke to each other. That can never be thought of now which you hoped for

then, and I too—God knows. You may believe that it is no light matter which forces me to write this letter. "MARION."

"What does it mean? I cannot understand it. I was seized at Boulogne with a touch of my old marsh fever, and have had a baddish fortnight. The moment I could travel I returned, to find this letter, and the place deserted."

"Yes, and the captain in the churchyard."

"Have you no clue? Man, you were here the whole time; you must know something."

"Gerald, if you want to know why Marion wrote the letter, you must ask your father. I do not know what he said to her, nor why she wrote the letter."

The conversation took place on the way from the Barnstaple railway station, whither the doctor drove to meet Gerald. Nothing more was said till they reached the Hall.

"Where is my father?" the young man asked.

"With his Collection, I believe. Gerald, be patient with him; he is excited and worn by the captain's sudden death."

Gerald pushed the doctor roughly back, and

ran up the steps. Joseph Chacomb heard him open and shut the door of the museum, and groaned.

"Now all the fat is in the fire. Anyhow, it is only hastening the inevitable row. We shall have to lock up Chauncey to-night with a strait-waistcoat, I suppose. Dear, dear, what a pity for me, and for Marion too, poor girl, that things could not run smoothly!"

He never knew what passed between the father and the son. He heard loud voices, which died away; he heard the shrill notes of Chauncey Chacomb; he heard his cries and entreaties. In ten minutes Gerald came out, white and trembling.

"Go to my father, cousin," he said. "Do what you can for him. Hide him—for God's sake hide him from people, lest he should talk. Treat him kindly so long as he lives, for I shall never see him again."

"What have you said, Gerald?"

"Do not ask me. If he tells you, you will keep it secret, for the credit of the name, Joseph"—he gasped for breath, being perhaps still weak from his recent illness—"I am going

away, away from England. I cannot bear to stay here. I leave my father to you, mind. He is to be your charge if I never return. Tell Marion, when you see her, that I accept the inevitable, but I love her still.'

"I will take care of your father, but why—?"

"Again, do not ask me. Has that fellow taken out my luggage? Very good; then it may remain in the dogcart. I shall drive back to the station. Perhaps I will write to you from London."

He seized the reins, and drove away, leaving the doctor speechless.

Then he went to see his cousin. Chauncey was sitting, calm and composed, at the window. He raised his eyes heavily when he saw the doctor, but did not speak.

He maintained a perfect silence for four days. The doctor began seriously to think of a private asylum. Then came a letter from Gerald, telling in the fewest words possible that he was starting immediately for Southern Africa, and would be gone when the letter arrived.

"I ask," he said, "for no news, because there can be none but bad news. I leave no address,

and shall not go to the post-office at the Cape or Natal for letters. Perhaps I shall come back again in a few years. Perhaps not all."

Joseph Chacomb read the letter to Chauncey in the evening.

"I had absolutely made up my mind, Joe, that Gerald should not marry that Revel girl. I hate her as much as I hated her father. Did you hear how she turned upon me, and forced me to tell the whole truth—the whole truth, by Jove? Well, I told Gerald just what I told Marion."

"What did you tell them, Chauncey?"

"Marion found it out herself, and taxed me with it. As no one was looking, not even you, I confessed it all at once, and laughed at her. She did not look so scared as you might have expected; only her eyes were something like the captain's when he fell; but not so wild—no, not so wild: there never were eyes so wild as those. But they reminded me, you know. And when Gerald came in just now—Gerald is a handsome boy when he is in a rage—I told him too. He looked like his mother, very much. It is odd how little that boy resembles me."

"What, in Heaven's name, did you tell them?"

"Why, Joe, where is the use of pretending between ourselves? You know as well as I. You saw me do it. You saw me with your own eyes push him over the cliff. That was why the only evidence you gave at the inquest was how you tried to rescue him. *I* understood—yes, I understood perfectly well. You cannot deceive a man of my penetration."

"Let me look at you, Chauncey."

"Look at me as long as you like. You thought I was mad. I thought so myself for a little while. But I am not. I was never cooler in my life. It is true that I lost my composure a little when Gerald swore he would never return home again. That was natural with such a fine boy as Gerald—a boy to be proud of—only I am quite sure he did not mean it. He can never, you see, marry the daughter of the man I murdered. No, Joseph, you are a clever fellow, but you will not make me out to be mad. That is past even your medical skill."

"Chauncey, pull yourself together, man. Think, think what you are saying. I saw it all, from the beginning."

"I know you did, Joe—I know you did. And very good it was of you to hold your tongue. Very good and thoughtful indeed. To be sure, you were always a kind-hearted fellow."

"I saw it, I say. Chauncey, you did not touch the man: he slipped and fell. Your hands were six feet from him, and more."

"Kind of you, Joe—cousinly. Let us keep up the family honour, *outside*, and say so everywhere. You and I know better."

"What am I to say to this man?" cried the helpless physician. "How am I to persuade him? Good heavens, Chauncey, I tell you that you did *not* push Captain Revel over the cliff."

"Quite right, when you speak so loud."

"Who the devil is to speak soft in such a matter? Chauncey," he said, in a stage whisper, "you did not—you did not—you did not do it. It is a delusion which you will shake off when you recover."

"I am recovered," said the squire. "I know well now. I see the whole scene before me. But let us talk no more about it. The inquest was 'Accidental death.' So that I am quite safe.

Only it will be well to keep things quiet to ourselves, will it not?"

"Quite off his head," murmured the medical man—"quite! Come, Chauncey, come, my poor cousin," Joseph pleaded, "put this awful hallucination out of your mind."

"Do not be a hypocrite, Joseph Chacomb. I hate hypocrisy where it is unnecessary. So would you, if you had had, like me, all your life, somehow or other, to pretend. I pretended to be in love with Gerald's mother. I pretended to be fond of your society—"

"Gad!" cried the doctor, "this is like a horrid nightmare."

"I pretended to be the special friend of Revel; I pretended to like his girl; and I pretended to be sorry for what has happened. But I was glad, Joe—I was glad—only for one thing."

"What is that, Chauncey?" asked the doctor, catching at a possible means of restoring him.

"It is, Joe, that I understand now what the Lord did when he put a seal on Cain's forehead. He has put one on mine, and I feel it hot and heavy. It grows hotter and heavier

every day. I expect it will be like red-hot steel before I am dead. But I must bear it, and everything else. You will not hear me complain, Joe, whatever I suffer. It is upon me day and night—day and night. It would have been better that I had never been born, for I have lived to be a murderer."

Then the doctor, by a stroke of inspiration, bethought him all at once of his own utterances on the cleverness which is able to make capital out of things as they happen, rather than to speculate on things that might happen.

He rose solemnly, and standing before his cousin, a great burly person, over a misshapen, withered little man, like a big schoolmaster over a small boy, shook his forefinger—a very large, fat, and red forefinger, terrible in its shaking as Jupiter's nod—at his face.

"Cousin Chauncey, when people are mad, they are sent to asylums. If they make a noise, they are put into strait-waistcoats. If they fling themselves about, they are put into padded rooms. If they do not obey the keepers, the fellows kneel on them and break their ribs, and then say that the foolish mad-

man did it himself. They tickle the soles of their feet with feathers; they put them on bread and water; they never let them go out in the open air; they laugh at them, and mock them; they give them no books to read; they shut them up with gibbering idiots, who dangle their hands—so—and drive them really mad with their dreadful grinning; or else with raving maniacs, who glare and roar, and tear with their claws. Cousin Chauncey, you, I am sorry indeed to perceive, are gone mad. But at present I am the only man who knows it. I shall be good to you, and hide it—so long as you help me—from the world. But I must treat you, for the future, as you behave to me. I shall manage your affairs for you; put a proper person into the house to have charge of you when I am in London; receive and lay out your money for you; take care of your estates for you; and, so far as I can, prevent your making a fool of yourself. In return, you shall have your liberty, and shall do whatever you please within bounds; only you will hold your tongue. Try to get rid of me, and I shut you up; try to shake me off, and I lock you up in an asylum. Gerald is gone,

and I think he will come back no more to England. I am the heir. Make a will, and I will prove that you were mad. Rebel if you dare; try to get away from my protection if you can: you are in my power, cousin Chauncey, and very thankful—very thankful indeed—you ought to be that you have got a physician in the family to take care of you, hide your little failings, and —and spend your money for you, by gad!"

CHAPTER XII.

EAST and west of Tottenham-court-road—a thoroughfare whose great shops have not been able to redeem it from a vulgarity which enters into the soul of those who journey upon its flags—there run lines of parallel streets, this part of London being as regular as the city of Philadelphia, U.S.A. When they were originally built, a hundred and forty years ago, they displayed in their fronts a good deal of aristocratic hauteur and coldness, befitting an expensive and fashionable part of town. Their coldness remains, but their haughtiness has vanished. The streets are not vulgar, but vulgarized. Queer trades are carried on in the houses; brass plates, shutters, and window blinds bear announcements of callings alien to the general experience. A modeller

of human limbs, a stippler of photographs, a wax flower maker, a valentine and lace-paper manufacturer, a maker of playing cards, a painter of fans, a Parisian artist engaged upon the petty trifles on which we waste our money at Christmas and Easter: these are some of the professionals who live side by side in Lowland-street, Tottenham-court-road, in such amity as is consistent with trades which are not in rivalry. The majority of the ground floors belong to the offices and workshops; the first and higher floors are let out either on a system of flats, or in separate rooms to ladies and gentlemen who are, as a rule, occupied elsewhere during the day. It is to apartments in Lowland-street that the gallant young draper's assistant of Oxford-street brings home his lovely bride. It is here that the tutor (London B.A.), who gives lessons at a shilling an hour in all the sciences and most languages, finds a lodging adapted to his modest wants. It is to this retreat that the translator and the literary compiler, whose days are spent in the British Museum, return when midnight closes the public-house. Here are third-rate actresses and actors; here are betting men, whose

sphere of action is limited to the suburban fixtures; here are City clerks, who, by chumming together, are able to afford one festive evening in the week at the Oxford; here are the young and hopeful who look for better days; here are the old and battered, praying that the worse days may not become the worst; here are those who pretend to have fallen from affluence, and pride themselves, like Lucifer, upon the depth of their fall; here are those, once gentlefolk indeed, who would, if they could, fain forget the past and be contented with the present. The romance, the contrast, the poetry of London are not always where we have agreed to place them. Where life is assured and easy, the romance is of the drawing-room school, which ripples rather than disturbs the surface. Among the reeking and foul purlieus of the courts, about which not even a penny paper, trying to work up to the highest sensational level, dares to tell the whole, horrible truth, the romance, if there is anything that is not real, is brutally and repulsively tragic. Perhaps it is among these strugglers in byeways for life, these hangers-on to the ornamental robes of civilization, these people who

profit by the foibles and vanities, rather than the necessities of their fellows, that a deeper romance may be found, in which life is really earnest, and the situations are really melodramatic.

No. 15, Lowland-street stands at the corner which marks the confluence of that thoroughfare with Euphrates-row, a place of less pronounced respectability. It is on the south side of the street; its door bears two plates, one of brass: on this the name of Ruddiman represents, as was supposed a generation or two back, a landlord long deceased. The plate has remained, a monument of his worth, destined to last as long as the brass, and entirely unexpected in life. Immortality sometimes takes a shape not looked for. The other plate, a brighter and a newer one, is above it. It is in zinc, and proclaims the fact that here is Mr. Rhyl Owen's Academy. The door itself is decorated and furnished with a row of half a dozen bell handles, each of which is attached to its own room. In the window of the ground floor is a card, setting forth that lessons may be procured from Mr. Rhyl Owen on moderate terms, in book-keeping, French

correspondence, Latin, arithmetic, and penmanship in all its branches. At the back of the house, where once stood the garden, in the old times before Euphrates-row was a modern encroachment on the privacy of Lowland-street, they have built the school-room—a long and low apartment, whence may be heard, at morn and afternoon, the buzz of many lessons, the voice of the admonisher, and the wail of the admonished. That is the select academy of Mr. Rhyl Owen. In the evening it is let out as a genteel dancing school, to a professor with a respectable connection, whose daughters assist in imparting a knowledge of the art, and in maintaining the lofty tone of the establishment. Ladies of the ballet are not admitted to these lessons. Once a year—I am sorry the anniversary will not fall within the limits of this book—a ball is given: tickets of admission for lady and gentleman, half a crown each; refreshments, provided by the eminent host of the Grapes, of course are extra. The staircase of the house is dingy, and one which is sometimes swept, but rarely cleaned. The wainscoted walls are blackened at about the height of four feet six, where people's

shoulders have rubbed against them for five generations; but it is a broad and handsome staircase—not so stately as one of those in the decayed houses of Soho, but a staircase which shows conscientious work and no contract. The house, as compared with most in the street, is thinly populated. On the third floor front dwells a lady who may have heard of seventy springs, but as all her life has been passed in London, she has never actually seen one. She lives on her means, and is reported by the outside world to be possessed of a comfortable income. It may be so, and it is perhaps nothing but a miserly disposition which makes her lie in bed rather than light a fire, dine habitually off bread and butter, and find a banquet in a plate of cold beef bought at a cook-shop in Euphrates-row. Perhaps, however, it is her ostentatious cleanliness which favours the idea. One of the bed-rooms at the back of the same floor is occupied by a young gentleman of four or five and twenty, who lives with his sister downstairs, and is supposed to be engaged "in the City." On the second floor there lives a hermit. This class of thinker is not so numerous

as in the old days when—as in the sixth century, before the Caliph Omar came to change things—the whole of Palestine resounded perpetually, day and night, and from end to end, with the litanies of those who fasted and sang, and the howls of those who flogged their own sinful backs. I have, myself, only known one or two cases of the modern hermit. One was a man who got into the habit of living quite alone, never going out of his chambers except to dinner, and then always to a restaurant close at hand, where he sat daily on the same bench and had the same food. He is still living, though prematurely grey. The other was the case of Mr. Lilliecrip, the hermit of Lowland-street. He was not a religious hermit, so far as the public knew, nor did he sing litanies like a Benedictine, nor did he flagellate himself with a cat-o'-nine-tails like a repentant garotter, nor did he fast and macerate himself like a Ritualist in Lent. But he had earned and maintained the character of a hermit by simply never going outside his own door. He had the two rooms, back and front, and the voice of rumour was busy with him. He was reputed rich; he was said to be

a nobleman in disguise; he was as great a mystery as the Man with the Iron Mask; he was a great criminal; he was a murderer hiding from the law; he was a forger, afraid to go into the streets; he was a political spy, obliged to keep himself dark; but, above all, he was fabulously, enormously, tremendously rich, and could buy up the whole of Lowland-street and never feel it. On the ground floor, as has been stated, is Mr. Rhyl Owen; with him his daughter Winifred, of her Majesty's Telegraph Department. And the first floor, together with the bed-room of the third floor back above mentioned, is let at twelve shillings a week, taken by the quarter and money paid in advance, to a family consisting of two young ladies and their brother. The elder of the two paints all day at her easel when she is not copying at the National Gallery; the younger sits at home and watches her sister, or goes out with her brother to walk along the streets and look at the shops. For it is four years since the captain died. Comb Leigh has long since passed away into the dim twilight of the happy past. The Revels—Marion, Fred, and Adie—have descended together to the level of

Lowland-street, and to the life that is called "from hand to mouth."

It is an evening in April, when the advent of spring makes itself felt in the heart of London by longer daylight and colder winds, rather than by any of the gracious phenomena familiar to lovers of nature in the country. All the children are in the street, playing noisily; the nearest clock has struck six; a German band blows at the corner with an energy which shows temper as well as tune; and the cold wind which, outside London, has stripped the apple tree of its blossoms, turned the lilac flowers brown, curled up the young leaves of the roses, and killed every little peachlet which was beginning to swell out on its tiny stalk, is sweeping through the streets and round the corners, driving the shavings and bits of paper round and round in the areas, rasping the housemaid's elbows, and painting the children's legs a lively red. Where does it come from, this bitter wind of the east? Does it always blow across the flats which stretch from Ostend to the Ural Mountains? And what manner of people

are those who dwell beneath its baneful influence?

On the ground floor of No. 15, Mr. Rhyl Owen is engaged in putting away his tea-things, having prepared and eaten that meal by himself, according to his usual wont, after the dismissal of the boys. The room is at once his dining, sitting, and sleeping apartment. A turn-up bedstead of the old-fashioned kind, constructed to look as much like a wardrobe as possible, stands in one corner; a wooden arm-chair is in the window; a cupboard by the fireplace holds the crockery of the *ménage;* two or three hanging shelves contain Mr. Owen's library, which consists principally of translations—not used as cribs, but forming, when he is not engaged upon Plutarch or the Book of Proverbs, his favourite reading; for Mr. Owen is as fond of Homer, Virgil, and Ovid as any other schoolmaster, though his mastery of their original tongues is defective. The table is equally divided between a pile of exercise books and a girl's workbox; an easy-chair stands by the fireplace, and one or two other chairs complete the furniture. The tenant of the room is small in stature, like

Zaccheus, Tydeus, Julius Cæsar, Napoleon, and most of the other men known in history. His face is seamed, crow's-footed, crossed and furrowed by a thousand lines, every one of which represents a vexation or a disappointment. His short and curly hair is an iron grey, and stands up all over his head, giving him a look of perpetual surprise. He wears neither beard nor whiskers. His eyebrows are thick and black, as if he was of a fierce and determined nature, which he is not. On his large and bony hands the knuckles stand out like cairns upon a hillside. His lips are large and mobile; his eyes are as bright as a ferret's. He is dressed in a long black frock, once a coat belonging to a taller member of society; its extreme rustiness proclaims its durability, and furnishes a proof that English honesty is not yet become a byeword and a proverb among the nations, in spite of the sizing of cotton and the manufacture of shoddy. Round his neck is a voluminous black tie. His linen, for it is Friday evening, might be cleaner with advantage. His legs are encased in trousers of a dark grey. How much his garments bulge at the elbows and the knees,

how their folds and sinuosities betray the habitual disposition of their master's legs beneath the chair, it would be long to tell. On his head he wears a black skullcap.

Mr. Rhyl Owen placed the tea-things in the cupboard, reduced the fire to a minimum, and taking his pipe from the mantelshelf—a long clay—loaded and lit it. Then he looked all round the room, like a dog who searches about for the most comfortable place, took a book from the shelf, sat down in the wooden chair, with his back to the light, and heaved a mighty sigh.

Just at the moment when he took the first whiff a knock came to the door, accompanied by the rustle of feminine garments. He listened for a moment, and an expression, half of fear, half of annoyance, crossed his face.

"If that's Mrs. Candy," he called out, as the door partly opened, "you needn't say, ma'am, what you came to say. I caned your second to-day, and I caned your eldest yesterday, and I shall do my duty upon both boys' trousers to-morrow if they deserve it. So you may take your boys away or not, as you like, Mrs. Candy.

There's the national schools," he went on, in a lower voice, as if he was working off an angry mood; "there's the young coxcomb of a certificated master; he knows everything. He ought to be caned for conceit, and I should like to have the job. 'Wisdom is too high for a fool.' You had better send them there. And there's the Roman Catholic schools, where the priest ought to be caned, and I should like to have that job too."

"It isn't Mrs. Candy, Mr. Owen," said a voice from outside.

"If it's the milk, you must come again, then; I've got no money."

There was a little laugh.

"It isn't the milk."

Mr. Owen walked to the door with the solemnity that a schoolmaster of many years' standing naturally acquires, and opened it himself.

"Oh, it's you, Miss Adie, is it?" he cried, with a changed voice.

"May I come in, Mr. Owen?"

"Surely, surely; come in."

She came in—the Adie Revel we left four

years ago, a young girl of sixteen. She is twenty now, and a woman; her figure is tall and shapely; her face, with features perfectly and absolutely regular, is set in a framework of light and waving hair; her eyes are of that limpid blue which seems as full of expression as the eyes of Sappho or Heloise; her lips are parted in a smile, which seems one of perpetual content—it is the smile of a nature which looks for little more than to get the greatest enjoyment possible out of life; and the expression of her eyes, which seems so deep, is as yet but the light of youth and health. Love, quickener of the real nature, has not yet come to transform the maiden. The sorrows of her life have passed over her as the breath of evening over a sea of molten glass, and left no trace behind. Her dress is of a cheap and common stuff, but it is made, by herself, in that perfect taste which almost deceives even feminine appraisers of the marketable value of other women's costume. It falls about her in folds as graceful as if it had been of silk, and fits her slender figure as if it had been made in Regent-street. Round her neck she wears a blue ribbon tied in a simple knot—

her only ornament. But she is so beautiful that she wants none, it is pleasure enough to look upon her; and if you listen while she speaks, you hear a voice as clear and musical as any bell, if somewhat thin—a voice which seems to be the fitting organ for a soul of infinite depths.

"Come in, my pretty," said the schoolmaster, the lines in his face softening all over, just as the lines in an old building soften when the sunshine suddenly falls upon them. "Come in and sit down, and talk to me. I've had my tea, and I have lighted my pipe, but I am grumpy."

"Poor old man!" said Adie, touching his cheek with the tips of her fingers. "Why is he grumpy?"

"Miserrimus," said Mr. Owen, bringing his chair from the window to the fireside, and putting back the coals he had taken off—"Miserrimus (nominative case, masculine gender, superlative degree, from *miser*, wretched) is the adjective that describes a schoolmaster. It is told that Dionysius the Younger sank to the lowest depths of misery, and became a school-

master—the lowest depths, you see: that is how men gird at the profession. Shakspeare puts a Welsh schoolmaster like me upon the stage to be laughed at. No one ever forgot that Louis Philippe had been a schoolmaster. Johnson was called a pedagogue all his life. Not a cheating, yard-of-tape-measuring counter-jumper among them all but thinks the schoolmaster an inferior animal—not one so poor to do him reverence. Lord! Lord! what does it matter, Miss Adie? We get our holidays, and then we can go fishing, and forget our troubles. And, after all, there's the blessed pipe. And Solomon says a word or two for us—'Receive knowledge rather than choice gold.' What made you come down and see me, young lady? Not but what I am proud to have you here."

The girl turned red for a moment.

"I came down because I was all alone upstairs, with nothing to do, and—and—oh, Mr. Owen, give me some tea. We have got no money, and I am so hungry."

"Tea? To be sure, to be sure." He got up and began to bustle about, laying another stick on the fire. "Why, what in the name of ——

Surely Miss Revel hasn't had any misfortunes. Wait a minute, my dear, wait one moment. The kettle is on the sing. Hungry! I have been hungry myself, and it's a dreadful thing, Miss Adie—a dreadful thing."

She laughed.

"Oh, not so very dreadful. Marion went out yesterday to sell some pictures, but could not get her money, so we had no dinner. This morning we finished all the bread for breakfast, and Marion went out again directly afterwards, and has not come home since. I worked till I was tired, and then I went to sleep. But sleeping won't make up for no dinner."

"Where is your brother?" asked Mr. Owen, shortly.

"He's gone into the City. But Fred will look after himself—he always does."

"No dinner to-day, and none yesterday. Both days I had a beautiful dinner, and just now I was grumbling!"

He shook his head as if he was sick of the selfishness of human nature, dived into the cupboard and produced a piece of bacon, from which he cut two or three slices. The girl looked on

with ill-disguised eagerness while the bacon was cooking in the little Dutch oven. When it was ready, she devoured it with the natural eagerness of an appetite sharpened by the absence of dinner for two days.

END OF VOL. I.